Hard Up on Pegasus
Hard Up on Pegasus

by

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Contents

CHAPTER     PAGE
 I.  The Opening Meet    13
 II.  The Show Card       29
 III.  Point-to-Pointers   47
 IV.  Horse, please       65
 V.   School Days         77
 VI.  Professor Pony      89
 VII.  Mode and the Moss-Trooper  97
 VIII.  Mares' Nests      107
 IX.   Woolworth Horses   115
 X.    A Platonic Dialogue 127
 XI.   A Point of View     137
 XII.  A Marriage has been Arranged . . . 147
 XIII.  Scent Lies         159
 XIV.  The Lovely Road     169
 XV.   Frost and Other Curses 177
 XVI.  Potted History     185
 XVII. Forgotten Horses   201

vii
Plates in Colour

Frontispiece

"His old aunt must have left him a trifle"
Down comes the flag with a crack.
The rug is slipped back, and saddling-up begins.
You may buy a rough diamond and shape it into a jewel.
If there is any great display of opulence.
Puts on a stable jacket and rubber boots, and does his own horse down himself.

An ill-behaved lap-dog can be more self-assertive than a kennel of sporting dogs.
You have rather a limited field of choice—brood mare, pensioner, or kennels.

"There's never no scent in Motton Wood?"
Keep my hands down and indulge in silent prayer.

"The French knights could not contend against the great horses of the English"

In days that give me a dryness of the throat to remember.
Illustrations in Black and White

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jorrocks would be worth hearing on this change since his days</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Hundred Guineas gains on and passes you</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is what they have come to see</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Three yards t'other side to first hoof mark!&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become oppressed with the seriousness of their charge</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatnot turns in his saddle</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We heard . . . that the gem-man wanted to buy a little pony&quot;</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Take him and try him,&quot; urges the dealer</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It must be broken and educated</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will be offered much fine gold</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheval—chivalry</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There must always be a grown-up to give an eye to things</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing gives moral support like riding-boots</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The top-hat is not only safer to fall into, but far, far, funnier</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take, for instance, floor mangers</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He does not want any &quot;blanked piebalds&quot; on his books</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Yes, you pompous imbecile&quot;</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generations of subalterns have proved that it can be done</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding well is much more difficult</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are not Weedon and Aldershot household words in the Empire?</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It sims to m'hai so cruell!&quot;</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alas! Ditch bores me stiff</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubs a confidential head against your shoulder</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of these horse-box drivers or chauffeurs</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Along the grass verges at the edge of the roads</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main problem is exercise</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed is he who has water available</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider any type-specimens</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very definitely a hard-riding lot</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin turned round in his box</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheered by a crowd . . . I mounted</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Opening Meet
The Opening Meet

The outstanding point about any Opening Meet is that although everyone has been talking about it for a fortnight or more, nobody is really ready for it, often not even the foxes. You will read later in The Times that: “The Gath and Gilead met at Pippin Hall and scent was moderate. Hounds found in Anstey’s Plantation and ran to Buncombe Hill. There the fox was headed and ran towards Normandy Coverts, a fine run of twenty minutes, but went to ground. Hounds found another fox at Priory Spinney and killed in a kale field at Langham.”

Well, that is what the Hon. Secretary or one of his devoted helpers told The Times. A succinct creditable account in keeping with the best of tradition, and no loose gossip about it, but it is not in the best sense a description; it misses the real flavour of the event.

The opening meet of the season falls round about Guy Fawkes Day and often produces a few daylight fireworks. In strict theory one has been vigorously cub-hunting and conditioning horses so that all should be ready for the ceremonial occasion. In practice the horses are mostly only half in condition and the riders are unmistakably soft. New clothes and saddlery are rather in evidence, and as we gather on the drive at Pippin Hall we note that Susan is sporting a new and beautiful bridle whose stiff and glossy reins slip embarrassingly through her gloved fingers. Old Martin has treated himself to a new topper which accentuates the deplorable appearance of his boots. Young Tom
Hard Up on Pegasus

Baxter, who for the last three seasons has ridden in a motley of family relics, is turned out in the fullest of new glory. "His old aunt must have left him a trifle," observes the acid Mrs. Lane, whose eyes miss little and whose tongue spares no one. No opening meet is complete without her, although most of us secretly believe that if she and her particular crony, old Major Magpie, were humanely put down and sent to the kennels, the Hunt would benefit.

Pippin Hall is not exactly a seat, except in the delicate aphorisms of house agents. It is, in point of fact, a singularly ugly Victorian house in a perfect hurrah's nest of overgrown laurels and rhododendrons. A neglected and rabbity parkland sprawls round it. Where trees have fallen the work of clearance has largely been left to nature, nothing has been replanted, and even the flat iron sheep hurdles which mark the curve of the drive show more rust blisters than paint.

The Hall looks singularly frousty; it is alive, but not really awake. Most of the upper windows have blinds which seem never to be drawn up. Few windows are open.

The meet is for eleven o'clock, and we are five minutes or so early. Already the long green margin of the drive is a car park. Two or three motor horse-boxes are unlimbering their contents at the roadside. From all points horsemen, horsewomen, and the younger pony contingent are converging on the Hall. Grooms and second horsemen are keeping up a steady movement, for though the night's touch of ground frost has gone, the wind still has an edge to it. Knots of lowly foot people cluster round in the shelter of the spindly laurels, then there is a noise of jogging hooves on the high road, a flash of more white and scarlet at the Lodge, and, brilliant in the sunlight, up come hounds.
"His old aunt must have left him a trifle"
The Opening Meet

As the nature talk expert of the B.B.C. has so happily said, "the fond attentions of the little humble-bee awake the slumbering passions of the gentle antirrhinum." As the pack is, with prodigious thong-snapping, swept into a clearing on the sward immediately in front of the house, Pippin Hall awakes to life. The inhospitable front door swings open, displaying part of a hat-stand and a flicker of tremulous skirts. From the dark shadow of the hall emerges a small procession. First the butler bearing a tray with two decanters and plum-cake. He is wearing a light town coat over his official "blacks" and, the morning air being chill, has crowned his tonsured dome with a very respectable bowler. He is followed by two footmen with trays of glasses and plates of sandwiches. Behind them comes the groom, at home with horses but unhappy with the tray, and behind him is the gardener, conscript for the occasion, who hates horses with an abysmal loathing and hates his burden of glasses and decanters with equal fervency. He is pale with emotion, having just seen a fat chestnut pony ridden by a minx in breeches snatch a hearty mouthful of his bedding-out plants.

The Master accepts the conventional glass and is given a choice of port or cherry brandy. Ages of experience and a great-toe which tends to detonate after wet weather have led him to rank hunting port next to barbed wire. He takes a gnat's eyebrow of cherry brandy. Sandwiches are, as we all know, fatal to gloves and are declined.

The servitors circulate solemnly among the mounted people proffering drinks and shew bread. They are later badly mobbed by the foot folk who have come to secure this cost-free drop of nectar. We recognise among the group surrounding the old groom the least competent local saddler, the worst farrier for
ten miles round, and as choice a collection of parasites as the local township affords. Taken in connection with the slight but manifest decay of the Hall, it is not without significance.

Mr. Jorrocks would be worth hearing on this change since his days.

In the olden days a Hunt breakfast was an occasion. There was one room for the ladies and another for the men, and very genuine refreshment. Today its little formal ghost survives in the trays of glasses and sandwiches, and there is no regret when the moment or two of entertainment are past, whips crack, and we jog off to cover. Mr. Jorrocks, I fancy, would be worth hearing on this change since his days.
The late-comers have now arrived, some just a trace too late. Mrs. Gyde, who learnt the value of well-timed entry both in the West End and on lesser provincial boards in the days before she was Mrs. Gyde, arrives just too late in her Bentley. The whole effect of the expensive fur-lined coat and that last touch of pulling on a glove is lost, except on the foot folk. Her groom chucking her into her saddle, for her mare is chafing after the vanishing tail of the Hunt. She has to elbow her way through a cloud of second horsemen and a troop of disorderly ponies in nominal charge of two embittered rival riding-mistresses. With malignant humour a bobtailed urchin of a pony wipes a slobbery grassy mouth on her boots. She makes some sharp remark to the small rider (perhaps passenger would be a happier term), who flushes and does her best to exert some control over her delightfully excited little mount. The other children glare loyally at the disturber.

Nemesis is at hand. Farmer Rowlands, unaware of any reason for hurry, calls to her "friendly like," "You've got a leather twisted, ma'am."

Mrs. Gyde discovers that her near stirrup is indeed cork-screwed, and goes through the ungainly manoeuvres of trying to right it and hold the mare. Clear and pure come the delighted accents of a small ten-year-old boy pupil, "That lady didunt know her stirrup was wrong, Miss Snaffle, did she?"

Tradition demands that, if possible, a fox should be found where the hospitality was offered. Nothing came out of the fir spinney except two flustered Rhode Island Reds. The hanger by the stream showed ticketed sticks and that excess proportion of empty cartridge cases to feathers that indicates shooting let to a town syndicate.

Fred the huntsman did not actually close a weather-beaten eye-
lid, but he, so to speak, "acted a living wink." He went through the motions of drawing for politeness' sake. A pied hound was less careful of the conventions, for it sat down and enjoyed a good scratch and two yawns.

The knowing part of the field were already out of Pippin Hall grounds and on the road to Anstey's Plantation, and so with no time lost the hounds seemed to take the tip. Up the road along and in over a topped field of sugar-beet. A pause by the covert ride, and then a note from one hound, a little doubtful in tone, perhaps—after all, it's the first day of the season—then a second takes it up. "Fox! It is a fox!" says the second; then all the pack give tongue, and before horses are gathered to their bridles the long double of the horn sounds away.

There is a gleam of scarlet among the dark firs of the plantation, a momentary jam at the gate of the ride, then the diminishing cry is lost in the noise of hooves. It is a big stretch of woodland, and not even the most knowledgeable of the field can tell which way hounds will go. A few try to save time by flanking the woodland, but this is a tactical error, for, as some of us well know, there is a railway cutting beyond and only two bridges, so it's hard away down the ride, and the better you lead the less mud you will swallow.

A keeper and two dole dreamers are on the bridge gazing raptly up an entirely empty railroad cutting to where the narrowing perspective vanishes round an easy fir-banked curve. "Are they over?" you shout, and like lethargic tortoises they draw in their craned necks and look at you vacantly. After an appreciable time of reaction it dawns on them that you, being on a horse and hunting, wish to know if hounds have crossed the line. With a vague gesture and a murmur they reply. You cannot hear what
they say, for the others are now thundering up. "Have hounds crossed the line?" you shout again. They bleat incomprehensibly together, but, thank goodness, nod and wave generously in a general south to north-west direction.

Over the bridge the ride changes to a lane going wrong, so over into a plough and up to a low crest. A distant note is half hushed by the wind, but it's right. Not too easy to pick a line, but there's a place in the far fence, rails and, I hope to goodness, no damned wire.

Three Hundred Guineas gains on and passes you.

Through the screen of trees on the crest, riding with half an eye for holes and another for the Absalom branches of the gnarled pines. A scrambly head-ducking jump over a bank and out on to a heath. There's hounds at last half a mile away going like stink, and just one pink coat in the middle distance—no, there's another fellow in ratcatcher riding to the flank.

It's good to be well up, but it's a vantage hard to maintain.
The others are now out of the wood, and those who mean to ride are riding. Three hundred guineas gains on and passes you, and, damn it, there's one of the Hyde girls deliriously out of hand on a snaky blood. However, the point is clear—the fox is making for Langley's. Then suddenly the pack checks; their beautiful compactness is broken up; they seem to swerve and fan out, swing round from the overrun, and, even at distance, you see sterns go up in confusion. It's a sheepfold; the flock have backed together in a far corner, staring foolishly at the hounds.

Philosophically one reflects that it gives one time to get up. But what's happened? Has the shepherd's collie headed the fox?—no dog is visible. Have sheep foiled the line, or has the fox doubled and gone along the hurdles? Anyway, it's time to ease up. "Hold hard there"—look at that young idiot galloping almost up to hounds!

Two fields away behind the sheepfold are the great oak and beech woods which make Buncome Hill one of the most popular points with our local foxes and blight the radiance of our huntsmen's easy care-free lives. Fred, you conclude, will cast hounds forward once he is satisfied that they are really fogged. To your unbridled indignation he does nothing of the kind, neither does he cast back. He apparently picks a pet couple or so and moves slowly across the wind to the left. A perfectly imbecile proceeding, you are concluding, when you notice, what Fred had probably observed a quarter of a mile away, signs of human presence in Buncome Hanger. Guns and a creeping force of beaters. "Who are they?" inquires the Hyde girl in a tone usually kept by lady gardeners for slugs. "Haven't a ghost," sings out little Contango, our brighter broker.

The radiant contingent of excited babes from the riding-school begins to arrive, having been steered by safe and devious routes by the harassed Miss Snaffle. A timely check is a godsend, for the covey is badly out of hand. Dorothy has lost her stirrups about six times. John simply will not keep his feet forward, but tries to stick on with his heels squeezed up behind the saddle flaps, and Betty has said, "Oh, Hell!" right out loud, to the envious scandal of the others.

Life is hard for Miss Snaffle, an endless affair of strapping muddy ponies, meeting imperious waves of holiday demand, getting children up to a point—then away they go to boarding school. But we all owe Miss Snaffle a debt. She does teach them. That Hyde girl—a dozen or more of these hard-riding beautifully-turned-out wenches who press us so hard. Why, they are nearly all of them Miss Snaffle’s old pupils. Hands and seat, and more often than not horse-sense, are all due to her teaching.

Yoipp—zoipp—BLURH! Here, HERE, HERE! The desultory picnic party of the bulk of the pack, the inquisitive rangers, chuck up their heads and feather. "Tracery's voice!" bays Random. "Come on, you whelps!" "Someone's found something; hurrah!" shout the young entry, not quite certain what has happened. The horn, the horn, and a scramble. Then once again music; a pause, while the elder brethren make sure for themselves that it is right, and then away before the lissom ten-stone whip can get to them. Fred was right: in a confusion of sheep smell, nettles, and the drift of horse smell Tracery had at last hit off the line.
Now if that fox had had real brains it would have kept going, and never a flicker should we have seen of it again, but it had misguidedy concluded that it had shaken off the slight irritation of the hounds, and even if Buncombe was infested by "poppers," well, there was Normandy, a gross affair of unkempt aged rhododendron thicket and a deep badger earth in the sandstone. Fox took it easy.

Heath and its rabbit holes spell caution, and those who can hold their horses ride with care. Those who can't, ride in that glorious recklessness which makes hunting (in spite of the oft-quoted dictum of the bloated Jorrocks, who had not been to a war and cribbed the quotation from Somerville) just like the very best bits of war for excitement and about a thousand times less dangerous.

In spite of time, scent held strong, and the pack ran compactly, streaking across the plough like a cup of milk spilt on a dark table. A pleasant fence, then the new green growth of seeds—and the hard eye of the Hon. Secretary. Woe betide the excited horseman or horsewoman who depresses agriculture. "Seeds!" comes the Hon. Secretary's best parade voice. "Hi, you! Seeds." He is a jolly good Secretary. A virtuous procession detours the headlands. Hounds are now three fields away. Next are pastures—how green and alluring!—but there is a grim post and board above the easy fence. "Wire," and a fool bungling the gate. At last—now for it. A footpath goes towards a stile. Some of them prefer the hedge, but a stile is, even if more alarming to the rider, easier than a stiff fence. It is ten to one the landing is sound, though most people forget this valuable consideration. Steady, well collected, and—gosh, does he want to jump the next field?—steady, you old ass. Hullo, there's Contango's chestnut without Contango. Young Tom Baxter clears the far fence in style—wonder what's
the other side. His mare took it so wide you could see the girths under her belly.

Steady, now h’up. You feel the splendid gather of the haunches, there is the momentary poise and flight of a big jump over water, and you know you have landed clean, thanks to your horse; you didn’t know what was the other side, but, thank goodness, one of the pair has sense and swift vision.

We are not gaining on hounds, only following. Why, here we are at Normandy. They are round the bend; there is pink converging on the point. Steady, steady, hold back, we are on them. Fred is just dismounting, and a furious chorus is rising in covert.

Well, it is no good looking at a hole among brambles, no good denying that sandstone rock is sandstone rock. The terriers are miles away and the earth should have been stopped; we tipped the keeper well enough last season. Still, it was a good little run—not bad, not bad at all. A dozen of us well up, some spills, and we adopt the nonchalant air with which those who got there ignore the later arrivals. The riders come in, and in the distance we see the vanguard of the Safety First Brigade in pairs and couples and bucketting columns of fours along a muddy lane. As they approach, one can see that the light and beneficial exercise has played the deuce with what old Jack Rouse describes as the Poultry Fund. “’Tis all for the binifit of the ould hins, ain’t it?” How clear-cut the picture this brings to mind—a rear view of old Mrs. Lane with her sinister weaving of her seat, a reversed Norn spelling the death of reputations, and her ceaseless fretting tug-tug of the leathery mouth of her long-suffering old jade.

Road and lane have taxed the Poultry Fund pretty hard. Their horses are soft—they economise in corn and stint exercise, and the riders are physically softer still. They have had it easy, but there
is lather on their mounts' necks, and there will be puffed legs and girth galls to reckon with in the morning. Well, it is to be expected; it's the opening meet.

A lost fox means a stand easy if it's anywhere near lunch-time. There is a short discussion between the Master (who has not been greatly in evidence) and the Huntsman, but we move off in a subtly leisurely way. True, it's a hound trot, but it is not quite the business-like hound trot of the morning. Hounds are thrown into a cover which looks as if it should hold foxes, but the farmers and the knowing ones make for sandwiches and flask. They know a great deal more about the shooting tenant than he believes is known to anyone except himself and his keeper. It is gaining two o'clock and the field is diminishing. Many of the Safety Firsts have had enough; a minority of the riders, recognising condition and the black dog of a long hack home, are discreetly evaporating, and Fred is taking assay of his followers for the season. He has a sure fox somewhere, and is in no hurry. The gallery play is over. Shortly he and a selected resolute band will begin to hunt.

The wait is long enough to cool off the irresolute, and then funereal notes call in the straggling hounds and we set off towards Priory Spinney. Almost insensibly the whole atmosphere has changed. The picnic lot have gone. There is no chatter. The processional effect has evaporated, and hounds again on the move and moving forward at a pace. Opening is over, real hunting has begun. There is a little larking over fences even though hounds are not running. Little Mrs. Ballamy, on that sturdy little grey which did so well at the Hunter Trials, leads over a pleasant fence well within her compass, but a bit of a challenge to others. Well, a glove thrown is a definite question—and it is the first day.
Thank goodness the Hon. Secretary is out of view and the jumping is clean.

Priory holds a fox, an obliging, ready fox. Wind has dropped, but here there are no pretences, no doubling back into covert, but a straight, good-hearted running start. Hounds are away before the last has scrambled into cover. There is a steeplechase along the woodland ride and then open country.

A mile or so of galloping leads one to reflect that perhaps one is not really in the hardest of condition oneself. There is a curious feeling that one's leathers have stretched. The resilience of Bucephalus seems to have decreased; he is no longer a springy bundle of excitable horseflesh, but is undoubtedly heavier on the plunge. That last fence, for instance, was not taken in perfect poise; in fact, he very nearly pecked.

But there ahead are hounds—unchecked and in easy condition. The uplands of the Downs are clear of November sun haze, and the ground is rising slowly to the foothills. We swing into a breadth of cow pasture with low-trimmed cattle-ravaged hedges, and there across a field of seeds rising to the near horizon goes the hunted fox. He's beat; he shambles in his trot, and hounds are gaining. There is an intermittent, gusty, crossing wind, but you hear at intervals the changed note of the hounds, no longer mute on scent, but in sight of their quarry. The pack gains speed and gains on the horses. They slip through the far hedge with deadly ease and into a kale field beyond. Then before we have cleared the pasture the throaty noise of the kill.

It was worth staying for, worth the long trek back home. The day is over, and though the sun is still on the gold and bronze of the early autumn colouring, there are swathes of mist in the stream hollows and a trace of chill in the air. At the cross-roads
we separate our various ways with a cheery "Good-night" to the departing. The horses know that they are homeward bound, but the excitement still lingers, and they break from walk into jog and mince ridiculously, pretending to be untired and ready to mistake any wind-borne leaf for a fiery dragon.

It has been, as it so often is, a simply uneventful day, unremarkable for any outstanding quality, yet somehow or other breeds a deep animal content, a placid reaction from thrill and dominant exercise—the Season's open.
The Show Card
The Show Card

The country is a region of enchantment to the horseman from November to April, but when there is no hunting, well, unless you farm or fish, there is not much to do. Town dwellers, on the other hand, actually like summer in the country. The younger generation, that is to say the pony folk, have nevertheless very largely emancipated themselves from any threat of a spell of horseless boredom. They have invented and stimulated a series of gymkhanas and fairs and shows. These occur either at the time of the Easter holidays or in far greater numbers during the summer holidays.

If there are not enough accessible local events to keep them busy, they give private gymkhanas, a perilous kind of pony garden-party, or plot together and promote some mounted affair in the sacred cause of Hospitals, Lifeboats, or the ever-useful District Nurse.

There is no very precise classification of these horse events. There are relatively large shows, small shows, big public gymkhanas, small public gymkhanas, local fairs, where jumping and bending events figure in very large letters among the minor attractions, such as a flower and vegetable show, bowling for a live pig, and other details. The more important shows are taken extremely seriously by the competitors, but the smaller shows, if less high in standard, are not a whit less competitive. An experienced parent knows perfectly well that a joint assault by eleven-year-old, fourteen-year-old, and their mother is likely to let him in for considerable expense and keep him busy for several days.
The rewards are enormous: a ribbon rosette and a minute silver cup—that is, if triumph crowns the stable’s effort.

On the whole I approve of gymkhanas and shows, for they mean that the children can use their ponies not simply at Christmas but during all their holidays. It does not hurt the ponies, and it does wonders for the children. Nor are all gymkhanas solely for children. Without some grown-ups it would be impossible to promote those weightier events where entry money swells the prize fund, and at the shows the adult classes far outnumber the events reserved for children.

The handicap at all these events is that the genuine amateur has to compete against the professional in the case of the horse-dealer and his family, and the semi-professional in the case of those who are vaguely connected with horses in a business sense. It is not too easy to beat a well-trained riding-school pony who is, equinely-speaking, a gymkhana expert. Some of these animals are miracles at bending, others stand like sentinels while an inexpert rider in orange pyjamas and an open purple parasol clambers back into the saddle for the Costume Race. But, believe me, the amateurs do beat them, and it is not every show which affords a walk-over for the dealers.

People often say they should be debarred from competing. At first sight this seems reasonable, but there is another side to the case. In the first place, their entries are valuable. If you ever sit on the Committee of one of these shows you will know that entries are the main, indeed the vital, factor. Secondly, not only do they bring their own entries, but they encourage a number of others. They get their clients to come, and they are valuable supporters. Lastly, these affairs are, in a sense, their best way of advertising their wares, and if you look into it you will find that they lay out
more in entries and the expenses of bringing a string of ponies than they ever take away in prize money. Then where is one to draw the line? Buggs, the big London horse-dealers, have a slightly camouflaged entry in the Open Jumping and a very competent man of theirs is riding “Tom Noddy,” a capable little roan pony entered by Mrs. Lucky in several other events. Mrs. Lucky is undeniably an amateur (you have only to see her ride to be convinced of it), but she has money and she wants to win prizes. She has bought “Tom Noddy” from Buggs for this particular purpose, and they are riding the pony for her. Well, you can’t say anything, anyhow, can you? But it is every reason for not excluding old Twisty Coper, our local dealer, the Splints, who run a sort of equine repair shop and school combined and are wholly delightful people, and even old Miss Snaffle’s infallible and aged certainty for the Children’s Bending. And as it happens, the amateurs, in spite of all, beat the pros. time and time again. How or why is a complete mystery to me, but I think that it is because horses love gymkhanas. It is a day out, a social occasion, a bit of a frolic, and time and time again they behave marvellously and delude their proud owners into the belief that they are really wonderful riders.

In times of trade depression competition becomes cut-throat, but, believe me, no pair of drapers trying to undersell the rest of Oxford Street ever knew what the competitive spirit was compared with the bitter rivalries of gymkhana competitors. There you see the will to win, and a course of shows and gymkhanas will convert a placid child, who is content to do an idle best attempt, into a keen-witted, intensely-concentrated person who means to beat the others. One lucky win in a small event goes to their heads like wine—then, and then only, they become real
competitors. It is something which may be mighty useful in other walks of life.

The more serious kind of gymkhana occurs about Easter, preferably on Easter Monday. Horses are then in hard condition at the end of the hunting season, and it makes a sort of finishing event, just as the Hunter Trials in aid of the Damage Fund come in October as a prelude to the coming season.

It is a fine April morning, one of those clear spring days when the air is like wine and the sunshine deludes one into believing that it is far warmer than it really is. The affair is really an occasion for a glorified picnic, for it starts at one o'clock, and if one is to do anything, it means that the whole day is devoted to it. The horses have to be started early, a car has to carry their rugs, feeds and halters, and all the necessary adjuncts essential to their comfort. A second car carries any competitor who is not hacking over, the spectators from the house-party, and the indispensable lunch.

Today all roads seem to lead to Owl's Green, where the struggle is to take place. This is a straggling village, sunk so deep in the clay lands that in ordinary circumstances no sign-post discloses its secret haunt. Today there are police on bicycles—respectful to the county and rather inclined to put their hackles up at Bank Holiday cars from town. There are A.A. men, and a large chalked notice board—TO THE GYMKHANA →. Above the bare twigs of the low hedges stretches a rather limp line of pennants. Stewards and honorary officials bearing enormous badges of office swarm round the entry, which is a field gate in a muddy pasture. A double line of wired chestnut paling has been laid flat to prevent cars getting hopelessly bogged, and a pair of big plough horses dressed in appropriate harness are at
hand to drag out any excitable cars which get stuck in the mud. The going is, however, pleasant for horses, and, one notes with satisfaction, not too hard falling if one happens to take a toss.

Already a double-banked line of cars is drawn up opposite the ring. The refreshment marquee is crowded with the permanently thirsty rank and file, and a knowledgeable crowd are making for the most spectacular points on the "natural course," which is to furnish the main event of the afternoon. A challenge cup is to be galloped for by "Members of the neighbouring Hunts," competitors (about fifty of them) covering the course in pairs. Scoring, if properly carried out, is on time for the round and points dropped at fences, but the relative values of points and time are not disclosed by the judges.

The first event is an Open Jumping Competition in the Ring, and a very formidable reproduction of the best Olympia teasers has been provided by local talent. The aged volunteers whose task it is to erect these gates, stiles, rails, and oxers, take a special delight in making them as formidable as the ring-master will allow. If it was the end of a six weeks' drought, the water jump would still be filled to the utmost possible drop. If there are seven positions for a wing and one of them is specially awkward and a stimulus to refusals, this position will infallibly be chosen. The exact position of the strident band is also carefully selected. It should be as near as possible. The conductor can be depended on to crash into his openings exactly at the moment a horse is being collected for its leap.

The Open carries a small pot of money. Fifteen pounds for first, ten for second, and five for third. A glance at the entries shows that the possibilities have not been overlooked by the elect. Many of the names are familiar in the show-jumping world. Some
are strangers, but all too many are distinguished. Still, there’s a chance even in the Open, and there are one or two youngsters about who can, as they say, “jolly well do with a tenner,” and succeed in begging or borrowing some fiery steed of creditable jumping powers in the hope that luck will be with them and the cracks will misbehave. Luckily for them, there is always some fifteen-stone farmer with a stout-hearted if not too sound old horse of which it is whispered that it can jump. A few days’ practice at jumps in the paddock, well-regulated exercise, and monstrous meals of corn may, if combined with an eleven-stone youngster who can ride, produce miraculous buoyancy in a competent old-timer.

We come across young Jack looking extremely sporting in a mustard waistcoat and a bowler which has never been quite the same since he went through it while trying to show a neighbouring Hunt how to ride. He is on a forbiddingly ugly black horse whose rolling eye and menacing bit-champing do not seem omens of a clean round. Jack’s left arm bears his number, a big black six on a torn card tied with red tape. The programme discloses that number six is Mr. J. T. Sainfoin’s “White Slaver.” “Good Lord, Jack, where did you get him?” The rider glows with conscious pride, and his beast wheels his massive quarters so that only a quick backward leap preserves you. “Heard of him at Blunderhurst,” answers Jack. “He can jump like blazes, but he is a bit nappy. I said I would try him if they would enter him, for all he wants is a bit of riding. Anyway, he ought to beat old Lady Bottle’s ‘Blather Skite,’ in spite of all her pictures in the papers.”

We hope so, for “Blather Skite,” Lady Bottle, and her sedulous pursuit of publicity and prizes, have of late wearied us sadly.
The Show Card

Up come the Mallows with a contingent of friends whose connection with horses is aesthetic rather than practical. Their "sports wear" is ideal for the Bois de Boulogne, but not over practical for this corner of the Gath and Gilead country. However, they are on excellent terms with themselves and disarmingly frank about their total ignorance.

That is what they have come to see.

"Now do tell me," one exclaims, "is it the horse which jumps highest or the one which jumps furthest which wins?"

You explain, "If a horse refuses, that is enters the wings and will not jump, that's one point off. If he does it again, two points off. If he does it a third time, he is ignominiously tooted out of the ring to derisive horn noises by the Huntsman. Then there's the matter of hitting a fence. If he knocks the pole over with his
fore-legs, it is four points off; while if he knocks it down with his hind-legs, it is only two. This is because a fore-leg is more dangerous to horse and rider. If he simply knocks off the slip along the top of the obstacle, that’s only half a point. If horse or rider falls, that is four points, and then at the water jump each leg in the water counts one point off.”

Illustration is given to the catalogue of misdeeds leading to deductions, by a display of refusal followed by an attempt to refuse again, which is changed at the very last moment into a cow jump which knocks the fence flat and unseats the rider. Roars of delight from the crowd—that is what they have come to see.

“What does that count?” asks your inquisitor. “From eight to ten off according to the rules,” you answer, “but considering how the fellow pulled his horse about, it ought to carry extra penalties.” “Well, the horse trod on his hat, poor man,” replies this sympathetic spectator.

Jack now launches his forlorn hope. He paces steadily, professionally, to the first jump, times his take-off well, and clears it with a foot or more to spare. The rails and the in-and-out are negotiated equally successfully, and it looks as if the boy had got a winner this time. Half a point is dropped at the stile, and then as he starts for the oxer the Owl’s Green Silver Band breaks loose with the brazen crash which folk who have heard this deadly gang at practice know is the opening of the “Esquimo Patrol.” “White Slaver” hesitates, arches his back like a cat, changes step and crashes the obstacle. Like a flock of pigeons fifteen little one-pound notes take wing and disappear into the blue beyond Jack’s utmost limit of optimism.

His luck again mends for the others and he jumps clean. The water jump, a colossal affair in the middle of the ring, remains.
This time the weird music appeals to the old horse—some latent far-off Arab strain, perhaps—and he fairly flies it.

Jack still has a chance of second or third if the others are not too hot. He rides soberly back past the collecting ring, where he is accosted by a florid individual from the pocket of whose rain-

coat protrudes an enormous black bottle. That must be Mr. J. T. Sainfoin of Blunderhurst. It is, and not far behind him appears a solid phalanx of relations great and small who break in a triumphant wave of admiration on the heaving flanks of "White Slaver." Forgotten is the fatal oxer, and all is lost in the glory of that great leap over water. "Three yards t'other side to first hoof
mark!" bellows the monumental liar. "I stepped 'un." It is clear they have forgotten all about any competition or prizes. They came to see the old 'oss jump, and as a matter of truth and fact that is what nearly everybody is there for. We are watching our friends or jumping our friends, and no one really expects to win anything—in fact, it has not been seriously considered. Our real object is to have a nice day out and be able to say, "'Brownie' did splendidly and went round as smoothly as possible! She is a good little mare!"

The chorus of praise and adulation round Jack’s horse is not checked when a hail comes down the field for "Number Six." He is placed third after all, and comes cantering back with a white rosette.

Now comes the really great event, the Black Challenge Cup. This is a colossal cup modelled in the bunion style of English silversmiths. Wherever there was room for a bit of really tasteless ornament on the silver shell it has been most expensively applied. The lid is crowned with the effigy of a man on horseback brandishing what is apparently a small hockey stick. The horse is deeply pitted with tool marks meant to indicate hair, but suggesting a series of incisions for fistulous withers. It is poised on a sort of silver salad, the individual leaves of which are about the size of the horses' hocks.

"Thank God," observes one competitor who had entered the police-guarded prize tent in order to add last moment repairs to her complexion, "it is only a challenge cup—fancy having to endure the horror for more than a year!" Little does she know that "a replica becomes the winner’s property."

A fine natural course has been selected and improved. The tops have been trimmed down off the hedge jumps and an elderly
hedger has put his whole heart into the work of making the remainder proof against a cavalry charge. It is laid—and bound. The ditches have been tidied up and thoughtfully opened to a good deep gripping angle. A horse rolling in just fits the ditch nicely and has to be got out with steam power. The red and white flags flutter gaily, and there are several places which tempt a horse to go straight on, whereas the next obstacle is at an inauspicious angle. Actually it is not a difficult course nor are the jumps stiff—in fact, it is a really good presentation of a natural course, but it has its pitfalls for the unwary.

The Gath and Gilead are rich in neighbours and there is a walloping entry. Some of it is deadly serious, but most are purely out for the fun and without the vaguest hope of being in the first dozen. There are a fine lot of horses, mostly regular hunters, a few the type which appear more often in the ring and attend a few hunts in order to get a very necessary standing for Point-to-Point entries. There is a grim, broad-shouldered little man, with a back view like Tattersalls on Monday. He has a large dark equine thunderbolt in charge of a groom who looks like the ancestor of all runners. You suddenly remember that you saw a horse very like that at a smallish steeplechase meeting last year. The card simply says: 37 Mr. J. O'Slattery’s b.g. Fulminate. You cannot for the life of you remember what the chaser was called. It was not Fulminate—yet— Further meditation is stopped by the start of the first couple.

The starter has no sinecure. He also needs a parade-ground voice. There is no trifling with a little hand-flag, and he has a good eight-foot ash sapling bearing a banner with the strange device “Simpson’s Fertiliser.” It flaps admirably.

Half the horses present have had several days of double feeds
and possibly a peck of old dry beans to lead to more effervescence. They reach the starter in a condition of hilarious gaiety under the impression that it is a superfine hunt. Hounds, pink coats, horn noises, the stimulating brazen crash of the band, all the other horses! What a game! I'll race you!

The competitors move about in the collecting ring trusting that by maintaining movement it will not be fully obvious that they have the slenderest control over their mounts. "Nine and Twenty-Four," bellows a steward. Nine and Twenty-Four appear. Seventeen, Eight, and Twenty-One are hauled back by their riders and honorary attendants on foot. "Odd number white flag side, even—red. Keep the white flags on your right—ready?"

He poises his banner. The riders nerve themselves for its fall. A hail comes from the Judge's tower: "Number?" "Nine and Twenty-Four" goes the shout, and Twenty-Four dashes off in a brilliant false start, is recovered, brought back champing, shies as the flag is raised, turns three complete circles, stops and looks at the starter. Down comes the flag with a crack, off goes Nine, and Twenty-Four, losing a few mad seconds in an attempt to reverse, flies wildly after her. The first fence is taken at breakneck speed with a hearty noise of crashing branches.

An appreciative "Coo!" goes up from the crowd as someone is jumped off and the horse gallantly tries to complete the course without help. A series of obdurate refusals is coldly received, but a jump by a rider without his horse, produces heartiest joy. A stupendous sixteen-stone calamity at the water jump fills the spectators' cup of joy to the full. "Splish!" say the children, relishing every last detail of it. "Oo! 'e was wetted!" No hazards deter an American lady from making the best use of her
DOWN COMES THE FLAG WITH A CRACK
small cinema camera. She rushes to secure a close-up of a spill, pointing the instrument at the crawling victim with an unconscious savagery of gesture that recalls the deft use of the earlier scalping-knife. She escapes by a hair’s-breadth the leap of the second of that pair, and her film runs out before the staggered spectators have recovered.

In ordered confusion the event goes on. Horses are caught, riders shoved up again. Nearly everyone completes the course and everybody is satisfied. The result is not known for long after, until times, and each fence, have been checked. Popular fancy is usually in error, but it is a charming convention that you say to all and sundry, "Wonderful round you made, you must be jolly well up."

The stern events over, one turns to the light relief of the Costume Race (over hurdles)—they always use this parenthesis on the card, probably in order to distinguish it from a mere undignified Derby. Now the best horse for this is a very nippy colour-blind cob. It might even be better if he were quite blind on one side, for the race is run, it is true, over hurdles, but won by agility on the part of the rider and stability on the part of the horse during the dressing up at the other end. To be really effective each costume should be complete. Not simply a gay calico blouse and a comic hat, but loose pyjama trousers, Lansbury Lido pattern, and a gay sunshade to be opened and to be kept open while mounting.

It would also be better if both dressing and finishing post were in the ring, for we are deprived of much gaiety by missing the dressing-room scene. Few things are quite so desperate as a young man in a hurry trying to hold up his purple pyjama trousers, hold a bright green parasol in a stiff breeze, keep
his top-hat on his head, and get near enough to his horse to get on it.

The girls are quicker and better than the men—change of costume and rapid improvisation perhaps comes more naturally to them, and the wild-cat scrimmage back over the hurdles is sure to be speedy. The umbrella makes this certain. No horse dallies with one of these tangled in its tail.

The Bending Race for Ladies is a breathless affair. It may lack the stately ineptitude of a children's bending race, but it sorts itself out in a few heats. If you want it to be really vigorous, you hope that the stewards will cast the heats nicely, so that you get two really hot practitioners to four amiable amateurs in a heat of six. This almost certainly means that the final will be a fight to a finish between skilled opponents. If you favour a wider distribution of prizes and a better chance for the not too skilled amateur against the cracks, you trust that fate or the authorities will put all the cracks in one heat. The survivor will inevitably take first in the final, but the other rosettes will go to less deadly exhibitors. There is never any real certainty about the bending, for the band may get in one of its neat bits of reprisal and upset the most elastic-sided bender that ever did its daily job in a riding-school. There is a legend that one unscrupulous young competitor silenced the band. She sent two small brothers to stand in front of it and suck lemons. It was a wind band. Only the drummer was unaffected.

Musical Chairs must come as a relief to the ponies who have been working hard in the more energetic events. It is widely popular and can be taken perfectly solemnly by people of great personal dignity. It starts in a dreary sort of way, everyone convinced that there are enough chairs for a round or two. The dis-
comfited wander slowly away like rather perplexed angels wrongly forbidden admittance to Paradise. Soon a quicker speed and a hotter temper are shown. There is slight sex rivalry. A difficult problem, for, as Jack says, "If you practically give up your chair to a girl, she thinks you are a fool, or says next time you see her that it was not fair sport and she is as good as any man. If you stick to your chair, they say you are a beast with no manners! You lose, anyway." The crowd decide early that a noxious little girl on a Shetland pony eighteen inches high should be allowed to win. She has a velvet huntsman's cap, blonde cork-screw curls with a blue ribbon, and a voice like an owl. The last four rounds devolve simply into a contest between the few surviving adult riders and the little pest. If she fails to get a chair, she stops in front of a survivor who, with a gesture of noble sportsmanship, and feelings of internal nausea, gives the child the chair. Applause of village matrons. What with the band and the pest, whoever wins Musical Chairs (second), Pest first, deserves high honours for sheer endurance.

There is a brief interlude of a tug-of-war between enormous men: the police, who look aggressively stupid out of their uniform and disclosed in striped flannel shirts, and a local team of footballers. This gives right-minded folk a chance for tea in their cars, but is popular with the local supporters who hope to see the Bobbies beaten. These interludes are not always popular. I remember seeing a display of Physical Training by the R.A.F. put on during a gymkhana. The instructor spaced his men wide. They began their slow-motion reducing exercises. It had all the life and none of the interest of a funeral. A matron gathered her brood, saw the arena free of dangerous horses and the tea-tent on the other side. So she crossed it, ignoring the sinuous mechanics.
Scores of people followed, and all one saw was an occasional islet of a white singlet doing silly exercises, while the unperturbed public ignored the display and walked devotionally to the tea-tent through this obscure manifestation of the honours of Peace.

There are still a few events to come: a Victoria Cross Race, picking up dummies under a cracking fire of blank cartridges by the local Terriers and hurdling back. This is all right if the dummies are straw. If, on the other hand, the ingenious authorities have had half a sack of sand or something heavy put in, it is a nice piece of juggling. You put the dummy over the horse's neck. It falls to the other side. You recover it, losing time in the process, and hoist it over the crupper. There it tickles the horse, who jibs and dislodges it. You recover it again, seize it by one arm and mount, hoping to haul it to the saddle. Its arm comes off. Not for nothing is this called the Victoria Cross Race.

Lastly, there is the Wheel-Barrow Race for ladies as goods and gentlemen as transport. The less said about this the better, for the laws of nature are inexorable. A fifteen-stone lady is always squired by an eight-stone youth, and a sylph-like flapper by a sixteen-stone heavyweight. The vast momentum of the heavyweights tips the flappers out of their insecure chariots, and the ponderous inertia of the fifteen-stone females defeats the efforts of their squires to push them a few yards over holding ground.

Few wait to the bitter end. The horses want their tea and the motors and the captains depart, while the champions, gay in their rosettes, trot back the miles to stables, having distinguished themselves above all other horses to the pride, joy, and enchantment of all so fortunate as to be connected, however meanly, with these romantic creatures.
Point-to-Pointers
A POINT-TO-POINT means wholly different things to different people, and can be a perfectly charming day out or a matter of soul and body-exhausting endeavour. Fortunately everybody enjoys it, that is to say nearly everybody, the spectators and the winners—even the defeated get a thrill; but when you see riderless horses at the second fence you guess that someone is—well, at least, temporarily dissatisfied.

The days and hours of pleasurable anticipation are, however, far longer than the gallant endeavour itself. Things may have quite remote beginnings. Just before Christmas young Bullfinch rode a remarkably instructive line in front of young Oodles. The latter had the expensive brown gelding Cash, seven years, which had so far carried all before it. Bullfinch was on his black mare, Nobody’s Love, aged. The hunt was, I am afraid, temporarily forgotten by these two young men, and back of their unpleasant display was a Primal Cause, rather a pretty one. No dispassionate observer who watched this little lapse could doubt that Bullfinch would beat Oodles at the Point-to-Point. Oodles, though he said nothing, seems to have read the lesson in that spirit too. He went to the Midlands for a few days, and early in the New Year behold him again with us on a newer, better horse, Shekels, a really lovely animal.

The pair never got a real try-out against one another again. Checks, scent, and a well-earned rating from the Master all intervened, but so far as could be gathered Shekels was the better horse, Bullfinch the better horseman. The Primal Cause main-
tained very fair neutrality, for even if Bullfinch had charm, Oodles had Shekels. Her younger sister, less discreet, was a determined Bullfinchite. "Cheer up, Ned," she advised him. "He will have time to spoil the horse before the race!"

That provided two contestants with really serious intentions. Then there was Whatnot's young horse. Whatnot was not exactly a dealer, but he was, so to speak, ready to deal. If Bailiff's Hope won the Cup it would add a good amount to the horse's value. Whatnot had hunted the horse. It was undeniably qualified, but it was a rather unknown quantity, for he had been mighty careful with it, and run no reckless hazards. It would complete its training with a friend of his who had a little training establishment on the Downs.

Then there was Halloran's big warrior. That was a horse with an experienced past, and it had not spent its youth in Ireland for nothing. So much for the owner-riders, but there were other horses with "a chance," and more than a few young-fellow-my-lads who were adept in inspiring the owners with a fluttering hope that "their horse" might earn vast honour by winning the race.

Young Tim wheedled Kitty out of Mrs. Grace by sheer eloquence of flattery. Bob, on the other hand, hoping to wangle Tweedledum out of the Major, was in a misery because that honest soldier said, "No, my boy. Tweedledee is far the better of the two. You shall have him!" and would take no denial. What made things so difficult was that Tweedledee really was the apple of his eye, and he alone of all living people believed in him. Tweedledum, his second horse, was best and might (if others fell) come home with fortune.

The best thing about a Point-to-Point is that it comes at a time
when horse and rider alike are in fairly hard training, but it is, for all that, a more gruelling endeavour than just hunting. This means the process of “getting him ready.” Some people pour in corn and exercise it out, others “school” desperately, some go into part training themselves and “give up” things with unfortunate effect on their tempers.

There is a prodigious getting together of steeplechase saddlery; people come and borrow leads and weight cloths. Grooms, usually fairly casual, become oppressed with the seriousness of their charge. Then magically the Point-to-Point becomes only second in local importance to the Grand National. Fancies are discussed, and you find that a neighbouring non-hunting farmer has a surprisingly sound knowledge of how all the leading
entries are shaping. His interest is wholly genuine, and has no base motive, for his bets are limited to his invariable "two shillun on my fancy at the Tote."

Anyone in the immediate entourage of a competing horse spends a lot of time looking at him—hoping him luck. The maids and men who have seen him go out hunting all the season with the scantiest of personal interest now eye him in a different way as he steps delicately in the yard. He is a "Point-to-Pointer." "Master's running 'is orse." Even old Tom, who has openly declared that he "never did like them 'unting 'orses—too long in the leg fur me!" shows a furtive awareness of great events.

If a young family have a horse running, it is a communal affair. No other subject of discussion is heard for three weeks before the day, and recriminations go on a week afterwards. Individual members will slip out and "give an eye" to the horse. A crescendo of dispute arises on all and every point from the degree of training to the shortcomings of the costume the lad must turn out in.

Weight, too, is terribly important. He is weighed first on the old platform balance used for sacks of meal, then for a penny at the railway station, and then for another penny and in different clothes at the chemist's. As it is certain he will have to carry pounds of lead, infinite care is taken to secure him a pair of merry-thought racing spurs weighing next to nothing. Appearance is, after all, more vital than logic.

A young supporter of Bullfinch's says, "Oh, I do hope Oodles won't win—beastly of him simply buying a horse to beat poor Bully. Can't you think of something to stop him?" I suggest sending a big pâté de foie gras two days before the race. "Poisoned?" says my bright companion, with perceptions
whetted by a course of Edgar Wallace. "No, just plain. He is greedy." However, we decide it is too expensive, and just leave the upshot to the Fates.

No less important is the "Ladies' Adjacent Hunts" Race. It brings in a rattling entry and a few veterans with seven-pound penalties for previous wins. It would be invidious to chronicle the neighbouring hunts of the Gath and Gilead, for it is, as any house agent would say, in a very good neighbourhood. Some hunts only have two or three neighbours (and are rightly looked down on because of this); we have so many that it is rightly like Einstein's doctrine of relativity. Not only space but time enters into it. The sleepy town of Moab is in the Moabite foxhounds country, but also in the Lebanon buckhounds. An unexplored wilderness, stiff with foxes, impenetrable with woodland and jewelled with profiteers' palaces, separates us from Lord Scamperdale's. There are beagles at Beagleswade, and somewhere another pack which is harriers in winter, otter-hounds in summer, and, according to its detractors, goes ratting on bye days. There is an awe-inspiring Garrison Drag at Catchester, four and a half mixed couple, a blue dog and two lurchers bred by the Depot Staff. These lead while the pack follows the riders (if not diverted by rabbits), and is being trained to Red Cross work by the Lady Dog Lovers Ambulance League.

Of course, we do not recognise these low people as neighbours in a Point-to-Point sense. No. Things are quite difficult enough as they are. There are ten legitimate neighbours. Three or four of them good enough to put up someone for the Adjoining Hunts. As for our "Nomination Race," that is open to all England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, but being a Sweepstake only attracts a modest proportion of them. However, something be-
tween thirty and forty is quite enough, and the suggestion that the committee send out diplomatic emissaries to say it's an easy thing and get more entries is wholly inaccurate. "Absolute rot," said one of them. "Who wants to see good money going out of the country?" Anyway, there is a check on things, as, unless R.V. (registered at Vintons), a certificate has to accompany the application for nomination by the Master. He has to be careful, for there is a legend that a neighbouring hunt once nominated some fellow who wrote from Wales mainly in connected consonants and was duly pillaged by a dark young man on a retired steeplechaser, whose whole hunt consisted of himself, his brother, and two ill-assorted Corgi dogs.

These difficult affairs do not bother the event known as the Ladies’ Adjacent Hunts, but it has problems of its own. There is often a slight obscurity of motive about it. Out of some score of entrants, six have a reasonable chance. Others appear out of emulation, still others out of vanity. There are some left for whom even these pretexts do not seem adequate, and one concludes that they are put in out of obstinacy. As it is, it is a highly competitive, very dashing event, stern and serious. Personally, I am rather in favour of our Field Master’s suggestion that there should be another Ladies’ Event, a compulsory race for all those who cackle at the cover side.

The violet ink line on the barograph is steady and high, the wind veering from west toward north, and it is a typical April day of clear sunlight warming the chill of winter out of the ground and a light drying wind to firm the surfaces the plodding farm-horses roll. Copses are flecked with the green-gold of pussy willow, the tree twigs blurred with thickening buds against the streamered sky. Along the lanes the miserable townsman in his
hire-purchase car plunders the primrose treasure of the hedge. On the main road traffic rolls unceasing to the tamarisks and automatic machines of Purgatory’s Esplanades. How gaily we follow the way of the happily damned to all the iniquity of Point-to-Pointing. Even Alice, a formidably strict Churchwoman who comes to aid with the washing, surrendered to the demon of irresponsibility when the picnic basket was crowned with menacing gold-topped bottles of sparkling cider. These look exactly like champagne, to the envy of neighbours, who jump to evil conclusions, but they are really much nicer, and are to the schoolroom at least a symbol of “splendiferous luxury.”

An early start means a good position near the finish in the first rank of cars, and the certainty that you will not be able to get away till late. The children approve of this. They do not want to miss a minute of it. Incidentally a position near the post is no use, as what you want to see is one of the hotter jumps.

All the sporting world is going to the races. There are the big, clean, varnished motor horse-boxes, freighted with hope and all romance. There are the big cars of big people, the modest cars of cheerful people, the practical cars of country people, and Lady Belshazzar’s Edwardian gondola, with its acetylene battle lanterns and splendid aged retinue. There are sports cars like water-beetles, chocolate box coupés, American comedies painted like agricultural machinery, and redoubtable machines whose owners understand engines, but find bodywork beyond them.

A doubtful entry over a corduroy track of chestnut paling laid flat on the mud admits us from the road to a meadow. Three less-well-prepared meadows have to be negotiated before we reach the sacred field.

Marquees have blossomed, and a hedge is lined with the
curiously uninformative blazons of the bookies. They favour affectionate diminutives for Christian names; their patronymics are consolingly democratic and commonplace. Like fancy dogs they affect a local habitation, and "Bill Leggit of Corunna" is, after all, as good a name as any. Curiously enough, they do not disclose any permanent or precise address. I am not inclined to hazard my hardly won crowns with them, but I like the gaiety of their blazons and the heartening roar of community lying with which they beguile the unpractised racegoer. "Three to one Lampas. Three to—one on Lampas. Kiss me Hardy, as Nelson 'ad it. Three to one Lampas. Three."

Two-thirds of the County Police are there. The voice of authority bellows largely, but what can even this importance weigh against the leather lungs of the ring? Boy Scouts sell the regulation card at the printed price of a shilling; wizened little touts pester one to buy the same card for half a crown.

Slowly the serried banks of cars grow to four deep along the line of wattle hurdles marking off the finishing straight. The crowd thickens, horses in well-brushed blankets are tied to the hedge which is the horse lines. Knowledgeable enthusiasts visit remote fences. A few hot and sanguine young policemen try to prevent a steady trickle of determined boys and women from local villages from leaking on to the course by unpaying economical ways. Hampers are unpacked, the forgotten corkscrew borrowed from a genial neighbouring car.

Three women are detected in new dresses; as many girls have strange young men. A member of a gay house-party causes joy by falling off the roof of his car into the food below. There are gay skirmishes among the dogs the ladies have brought. Endless schoolboys in caps of abnormal violence and eccentric vulgarity
Point-to-Pointers

walk up and down the line of cars fingering the cleaner parts of bright metal as if afflicted with the touching evil.

Dominantly the colour is brown tweeds shot here and there with jerseys and jumpers of clear primary colours. The riders, except for the women, are a sketchily dressed lot, but their supporters are of the horse-world horsey.

There are impeccable breeches, the lizardiest of canvas Newmarket leggings, polo jerseys of loud-speaker tone, and neatly split flared riding-jackets with a check like a housemaid’s mattress. The lay spectators are in tweeds, supported by shooting sticks and burdened with wholly useless field-glasses. Sticky, happy children swing on the ropes which rail the offside of the straight. Two optimistic blue-uniformed St. John Ambulance men parade with one stretcher and six superior officers.

Nearly everybody has a badge as a steward or something, and our officials are so enchanted by their parts and they are so self-conscious, that it might be amateur theatricals instead of the annual Point-to-Point. A duet between megaphone and handbell draws everyone who has finished lunch toward the paddock. Riders totter shamefacedly into the weighing-room, where they face a redoubtable balance. It has a history, sold out of one of Nelson’s ships by a Regency Disposal Board, but it is accurate if oiled, and anyway it’s fair for all. The proud owner, a man of years and substance, officiates. He is a farmer, and he breaks off a discussion with an equally stout pillar of the countryside, who occupies a chair in the tent, to attend to his duties. The crony is always present, always has been present; it is believed that he is indispensable to the balance. He is mistily there to “see fair play.”

The rider takes an insecure seat, drapes his saddlery on his
knees with the pained expression of a modest lady taking her first trip in an aeroplane. The Clerk of the Scales throws a flat cake of lead on to his lap as if he were feeding dog biscuits to a retriever, and continues to his friend: "'Inoculate the lucerne,' is what he says, and I says, 'I've something else to do besides running round a pasture with a squirt.' 'The seed, I means,' says he. 'Well, why can't you say so?' says I. 'Nother pound 'll just about do it. No? Half, then. Orl right, and don't drop none of it neither till you weighs in agin. They can't let us alone with forms and orders and inoculation."

The rider emerges, now for the first time aware of his real unimportance in the day's doings, and makes a pigeon-toed way to his horse. This has been behaving itself very admirably. It has stood well in line with its massive quarters toward the hypnotised crowd. When slightly restive it has been led round by a groom, whose stern sobriety will not last out the day if it wins. However, he is steadier than his master at the moment. The rug is slipped back, and saddling-up begins. Not a buckle untested, not an end not tucked home. Master and man move round the lovely animal with easy, graceful touches, accomplishing the toilet. Two or three are already up, fidgeting at ease into the pliant light saddles, twisting their numbers on their left arms, or maintaining a conscious imperturbability. Oodles comes out to mount Shekels. He looks rather formidable, for there is a polish about his equipment and he has an air of assurance. Shekels lays back ears and makes a grimace of teeth. Young Bullfinch follows, looking rather pale and anxious. He is wearing a disreputable black coat made of something like bombazine, which he has borrowed for the occasion. His peaked cap is too far down over his eyes, and by the look of his saddle-cloth he has dead weight
THE RUG IS SLIPPED BACK, AND SADDLING-UP BEGINS
to carry. Friend and supporters squire his mare. A cheerful sister girths up for him, and a battery of eyes see that no detail is missed. Nobody's Love is a singularly misnamed mare.

A brief circle or so round the paddock to enable people to decide their volatile fancies, and out they go to the canter to the post. Officials swarm like bees, and the crowd besieges the two-shilling booths of the Tote. This institution, despite the milling mob and the long queues and delays, is deservedly popular. It cannot, like its rivals, remember something more important somewhere else and go.

By a dispensation of Providence or the rotation of crops, you can hardly ever see all the fences on a course. You get a good view of three or four, a doubtful vision of a few others, and one or two are wholly invisible; others too far to see with certainty. The lead was with Halloran's big horse, the others bunched and fairly level for the first two fences. Then we saw a riderless horse, and, as usual, one reflected that it was a pity that horses were not stencilled with their number in whitewash on their flanks. It was one of four chestnuts, or was it a light bay? Anyhow, someone was out. All disappeared behind a rise, all one saw was ant-like figures of spectators running in ludicrous silhouette against the crest of the hill.

A lad on a car roof, using enormous glasses, caught the next glimpse. Number five leads. That was Bailiff's Hope. Then infinitely distant and seemingly quite slowly they begin to show again. A murmured roar of last chances rises from the distant ring. Three in it—no, four—and Bullfinch, in black, third. Again out of sight behind a tall hedge. The police push back the bulging spectators, and above the note of the crowd you hear not the sprinting gallop of two-year-old flat race youngsters, but a good
plodding hunting gallop. It has taken it out of them. Black Coat has come up, but Bailiff’s Hope has the lead of him by three lengths. Shekels is invisible. Two fences more. Bullfinch is coming up level. They jump the last, a mild brush, almost together, and Whatnot turns in his saddle to see what presses so close, and loses perhaps four strides. Bullfinch simply rides, giving the mare all the freedom he can. She seems to make no spurt, no effort, but surges ahead three lengths before the other in the brief span of the straight.

One by one, belatedly the others come up, but not Shekels. Gradually you realise that Shekels was the loose horse at the third fence. Earlier knowledge might have given you less anxiety, but deprived you of a thrill. Bullfinch has won. You are delighted for the boy’s sake, but how quickly he becomes wholly unimportant. You have the next race to absorb your volatile
attention, besides the patent joy of having the family money to draw from the totalisator booth.

The Ladies' Race is always the event which involves many agricultural friends in complexities with their half-dollars. They come to some sort of a shrewd conclusion on the subject of the horses, but reverse these decisions in response to the merits or apparent demerits of the riders. Their wives, who have an equal if less vocal say in the placing of the speculative fund, come to their decisions by circuitous routes. They may lack the incisive swift determination of the Cockney matron, but they absorb in a placid bovine way all the same points. It would probably astonish some of the lady riders if they knew how their sisters outside the ring weighed them up, literally weighed them up by the live weight stone before they uttered opinions supporting an investment.

We usually put up some four home champions. Three of them are competent hard-bitten jades, the fourth a sporting novice who rides for the thrill rather than any real hope of success. Still, there is always a chance—there may be a tangle in the lane with just elbow-room by the far flag—the kind of chance which brings number five up to the proud position of number one.

The visiting entry is pretty, and pretty tough. There is a weather-beaten, workman-like dame with a cheerful face like a pippin. She is from the Moabites, but a rising accent at the end of a stressed sentence betrays familiarity with County Cork. There is the neatest piece of work from the Lebanon, lissom as a willow, buckskin steeplechase saddle, horse bandages cut to a vogue pattern, and a snaky three-quarter-bred blood mount, Arab nostrilled, and as smart and disdainful as the third generation.
Most of the ladies' mounts are aged, one or two are veterans with a seven-pound handicap as a medal for past victory, but the twelve stone is not too much for most of them; yet nearly all except a side-saddle entrant have to carry weight. Their squires attend them bearing this burden, and as they mount, the girls look like a lot of tall youths riding with a semi-professional short stirrup.

They are, in rather striking contrast to the men, very neatly turned out. The men with rare exceptions look like a lot of supers dressed by a theatrical costumier or stud grooms out for morning exercise. The women all succeed in looking properly dressed for the part, and in spite of all the dull uniformity of black crash helmets, manage to wear them as if each was an individual new hat.

A skittish graceful grey is largely favourite on the Tote, but the bookies' boards mark heavily down against two others. One is a bay gelding, seven years and a seven-pound penalty, a known but a chancy horse (it refused badly last year); the other is an unknown element. The rider is matter-of-fact, capable, and, despite the unnerving excitement of the preparations, perfectly at ease with her horse. It pivots on its quarters to leave the ring, and there is promise of nervous power in those muscled hocks. M'yes, I think so.

On the whole the women look as if they ride better than most of the men. Only the horses could tell us if they really do, but taking the weight and the time as the admissible evidence, it is a delusion born of our native gallantry. We men dash in to say how well they rode, but we mean by comparison with the accepted male standard of excellence.

The bay gelding wins by fifty yards, rather indolently followed
by experience far less beat than her fair rider. Then—lente, lente, currente—come in the far disjointed tail of beaten Amazons, each to rapturous reception by an entourage not so much dismayed by lack of laurels as secretly delighted that there is no occasion for nursing home or funeral wreath.

Till now we have been, if not precisely family parties, at least neighbourly. The Nomination Race is a matter of wider import. Here are stranger knights at our tourney, and very strange some of them are too. “Hello,” says Tim Blister the apprentice vet., “see that big black—that’s Tom Crupper’s, only thing in the race.” Precisely similar information, but with a change of horse and name, is given you by other friends. You make a grim selection and return to the car to be greeted with, “Tea after this race, Daddy.” You disgorge what plunder you have amassed. Winnings belong, by family custom, to the younger generation, losses are the portion of the old.

Yet, oddly enough, there are no old people at a Point-to-Point. There are men of years, but they are boys; there are dames nearing eighty, but gay as children for the day. All is youth, health and vitality, magic of horses and country pleasure, real enjoyment and real sport.
Horse, please
Horse, please

To be about to buy a horse has a peculiar effect on the individual. Some get as proud and pleased as expectant mothers. Others are miserable in anticipation of being sold a pup rather than a hunter. No one has compiled an exhaustive list of the ways of buying a horse because it is probably inexhaustible, but it can be a straightforward affair of bidding at Tattersalls, or it can be a tortuous and many angled private negotiation with a dealer or someone who deals, or, most dangerous of all, a private vendor.

In any case, the condition of being about to buy a horse is interesting, for once it becomes known that you have gone broody, offers of horses come from the most unlikely and entertaining quarters. In the country, whatever you say will be travestied and used as evidence against you. You have, let us say, been considering buying a quiet hack hunter for modest use. Young Alsike, son of a farmer who “breeds a few,” appears, towing a giant animal about eighteen hands, young, decidedly debonair and, despite all he says about its parentage, obviously a splendid vanner. The neatest clipping and a deft use of brilliantine fail to mask its awesome hairiness, and the only true thing its owner says is that “it is up to any weight.”

In order to get rid of him, you explain that it is not what you wanted; in fact, too good—far too good for your needs. You wanted a light pony for one of the girls, something about 14.2.

Two days later a repellent horde of van-dwellers camp on the edge of the highway adjoining your land, and a deputation arrives
Hard Up on Pegasus

with an assortment of the poorest forest ponies you have set eyes on. Hi Lubni, a little unshaven ferret of a man, is impresario. "We heard," he says impressively, "that the gemman wanted to buy a little pony, so we come over, for we have got just the very 'orse the gemman is looking for. Kim hup, Mat. Show the gemman the jumping pony!"

Mat, a jowly kind of degenerate in a choker, swings his long legs over the saddle and dismounts. The pony is apathetic.

While your attention is concentrated on the pony, wondering how the poor devil got its assemblage of deformities, you realise that the audience is silently increasing. Two Laura Knight type cross coster-gypsy doxies appear. Ragged children rustle in the shadow of the laurels, and you hear the dogs bark and the larder windows slam. These noises betoken that the household is awake to the onslaught of the raiders. "They will," says my farm fore-
man, without heat or blame, and dispassionately as though speaking of a plague sent by God, "pinch anything which is not too hot nor too heavy; and the trouble they take over it, too."

The rather dull eyes of the pony impress Mat with the need of showing it to better advantage. With one hand concealed under the tangle of mane, he covertly jags the rusty old snaffle in order to make it bridle.

"A luverly pony that, sir," repeats Hi Lubni unctuously, "bred by a gemman out of a polo mare it was. Jump anything!"

"Betcher it ud jump a five-bar gate wiv me or my mate," de­claims Mat, with the air of one setting a cynical, hard, and un­believing world at grim defiance.

It looks, poor devil, as if it had jumped little but eighteen-foot prison walls since it was foaled.

You disclaim with very real sincerity any desire to possess the animal. "Dirt cheap it is too," they cry in concert, "a luverly pony. Look at his mouth, sir; just four year old, quiet as a lamb, brave as a lion, a luverly little 'orse."

You look at the mouth, an easy inspection, but not without in­terruption from Hi and Mat, who do not want too close a scru­tiny. The pony is full six—six off.

"Fifteen quid to you, sir!"

The mention of a sum of money galvanises the rest of the gypsies into life. A short derisory ballet breaks out among the children, checked by the elder doxy.

A little feeling along the legs is like a lesson in elementary geo­graphy—there are promontories, capes, and peninsulas.

Dejection seizes on the would-be seller, and there is a sudden flash of enforced candour.

"Oh, I know he ain't quite clean. He'd be wuth forty if he was,
Hard Up on Pegasus

but there ain’t nothing to matter beyond a blemish. Trot ’im out, Mat!” Chorus: “Let the gemman see ’is paces.” Solo from humorous imp aged eleven or sixteen, a stunted goblin of dirt, “Let the gemman ride ’im ’isself!”

The pony breaks into an uneven, cadenced shamble, then into a head-hanging collar trot, and at last into a cramped donkey canter. The odd thing is that, knowing the utter worthlessness of the beast, you are toying with the idea that with decent treatment it might be repaired. It is sentimentality, for half an hour ago you were grousing at an honest farrier’s bill, and now you are meditating sheer throwing away of money.

There is a fiction-writing school who like the glamour of the gypsy. Today it has a rather grubby sex bent. In the older days of George Borrow this was less stressed, and there was a horsey flavour to Petulengro which was a redeeming essence. My grandfather knew Borrow fairly intimately and had a genuine if non-literary appreciation of him as “one of the most stupendous liars who ever breathed.”

They had both been mixed up in wholly non-Biblical goings on in Spain, and the old man had no romantic opinion of gypsies.

Personally, I do not think they are intentionally cruel. For a primitive people they treat their animals fairly well—but their standard of “well” is lower than it ought to be. They do their own rough farriery, and it is—well, I suppose you cannot call it sheer cruelty, but it is not good enough. It would not be a bad thing if some of the funds applied to fussing about Field Sport were applied to the alleviation of the condition of gypsy-owned ponies. There are admittedly exceptions—a good pony worth money is, as a rule, well looked after in the hopes of a sale—but I think that the condition of the unsound ones might stand a good
deal of beneficent interference. Personally, I cannot afford to run
a home for hopeless ponies, but if I had money it might be worse
spent than in redeeming a few poor slaves.

"Fifteen pun, not a penny less," says Lubni, almost flinging
down his hedge hazel goad.

"Two pound ten is about the mark," is my not too hearty
response.

Clouds again blight the gippo sky. They murmur as if op­
pressed by incredible doubts. The children draw in to their
mothers' skirts. The crudely artistic Mat spurns the gravel of the
drive with a boot stolen from a scarecrow and neighs sarcastically.

"The gemman thinks 'e's got a curb," says Hi with wistful
appeal. "Strike me lucky, 'is 'ocks is sounder nor mine. Run 'im
up agin, Mat."

Slowly the price abates towards ten. I rise lethargically with
half-crown or five-bob admissions. The pony would be dear at a
gift. I do not want it. I have no use for it, but I have been en­
trapped into this discussion by feeble-mindedness and—poor
little devil.

Round about eight pounds negotiations collapse. The children
realise that drama is over and set resolutely about decoying atten­
tion while the elder ones seek something stealable. "Eight
golden suvrins, not a diner less!" declares Brasil.

"Four quid and a headstall," is my adamantine reply.

Dejectedly the cortège leaves the gate. A few lurchers and
children draggle behind.

You would think the curtain is down on the drama. No, this is
only the first act. They will be back in an hour after debating the
difference between your price and the knacker's, the prospects of
sale elsewhere, and the work equivalent of the beast to the family.
On the other hand, if they come with a good pony—and they sometimes do—negotiations are speeded up by a show of notes or coin. Money in hand has an appeal to the primitive. Clink a golden suvrin.

The next visitor is a dealer. He, too, has just the horse and "heard." It would just suit you. Making allowances for a change in coat, it appears to be remarkably similar to a beast which attracted your attention with a neighbouring hunt. You remember a disconsolate rider with a bad over-reach. To an unskilled eye there is no sign, but "from information received," you find a confirming scar and thickening. As a matter of remote interest, the price? You shake a disconsolate head and lose even that little flash of polite interest.

"Take him and try him," urges the dealer. What could be fairer? Well, it suits some people, but it is not the cheapest way. It has a seductive element of safety about it—but you lose the gambling interest. Horse-dealers do not hazard much.

On the whole it is best to see what you can afford, seek out your vet. and go up to Tattersalls on Monday in his company or custody. You will be able to back your fancy in shape, size, and estimation of temperament, and he will be able to spot any obvious anatomical shortcomings. Nothing will guarantee mouth or behaviour, but, on the other hand, most horses are not too bad, and it is odds against your getting a criminal, though you may perhaps get a slug.

Tattersalls is not very awe-inspiring, and it is beautifully conservative. Buy at the end of the season and horses are cheap. Keep will cost you little, and good horses which have come down a little in the social scale, but which will do a modest man in the provinces well for many seasons, are there in quantity. You can
pick up the right sort, not perhaps young, not certainly without blemish, but with heart and experience. You have the choice of endless lots, warranty according to catalogue, and if the selection should turn out indifferent, you can put him back again.

Just as a novice learns a good deal by watching an expert bridge player, so it is quite worth while going into Tattersalls to watch even when you cannot afford to buy. You will get a new standard

"Take him and try him," urges the dealer.

of values, but it is fatally easy to yield to temptation and buy a wholly unnecessary horse. One maxim must always be remembered. Unsound horses eat as much as good ones, and require a great deal more looking after during their periods of repair.

The architecture of the celebrated sale yard reminds one of those gloomy engravings of Roman ruins which hang in doctors' waiting-rooms. The little fountain arrangement in the centre is a symbol of abiding melancholy. The galleries, a great triforium,
disclose glimpses of coaches, panoplies of harness, and suggestions of a vanished glory. The atmosphere is horsey, but stern and serious rather than exhilarating. There is a rigid “no smoking” rule. The crowd is grave and their costume variegated. Some affect the undress of sport, others suggest the unrelieved gloom of the necrologist. Some are real bidders, others pursue a useful function in appearing to bid until the lot reaches the reserve its optimistic owner has put upon it. Not always does the fall of the hammer indicate guineas pouring into the vendor’s pockets. The highest real bid may be very materially lower than the reserve.

As in theatres there is a social distinction between the stalls and the boxes, yet in point of fact the ideal may as likely be in one as the other. Go round all of them.

The alluring descriptions of hunters in the catalogue make informative reading, and the qualification “good” is a very necessary one. The name of the owner is on the whole better than the bleak anonymity of the “Property of a Gentleman,” and sometimes a useful indication can be arrived at from the country the horse has been hunted in. Sometimes these past experiences are more flights of fancy than over timber, but then, after all, horse-dealing is notoriously almost as hazardous an enterprise as agriculture.

It is perhaps at the sale yard that you realise most the money value of your personal standard as a rider. If you are a complete mutt, you have to pay a good deal more for a really confidential steed. If you have decent hands, horses fretful and wayward with less gifted individuals may yield you reliable pleasure their previous owners have not attained. You will find in some sense a cash reward for all your virtues and an equivalent tax on all your shortcomings. If you are superhumanly gifted and incredibly
YOU MAY BUY A ROUGH DIAMOND AND SHAPE IT INTO A JEWEL
patient, you may buy a rough diamond and shape it into a jewel; but even if you are just ordinary (it is exceptionally rare to find anyone who even admits this even in the secrecy of his heart. We are nearly all rather good—or pride ourselves that we are), you can even today buy quite a fair horse at quite a moderate price. To approach perfection is very expensive although terribly seductive, but a modest incompetence can be inexpensively accommodated.

On the whole it is, I think, wise to buy horses away from one's immediate circle. It saves a good deal of awkwardness—and it enhances your chance of selling at a profit if you want to. Selling a horse is the past degree of buying one. It is, I think, about four times as difficult, but it is splendidly exciting for anyone of sanguine and romantic temperament.
School Days
School Days

One of the troubles about a young horse is the vital matter of its education. Your two- or three-year-old may have beauty, strength and charm, but it also has to have its essential accomplishments. It must be broken and educated to at least a modest standard if it is to be accounted a fully qualified horse.

We may usefully divide the process of education into breaking and making, the first being merely a minimum standard of general education, while the second can be anything from a modest degree to a very highly developed standard of equine learning and a perfect polish of manners.

The average hunter is not as a rule very highly educated—in fact, it is doubtful whether outside the Army schools many horses have ever the real time and training spent on them which qualifies for the description “perfectly broken and made.” A certain number of the more expensive type of hunter are fairly well trained, but the rather heavier balance are little more than half educated at best. The residuum of natural disinclination to obey easily is put down to native sin or delinquencies inseparable from the equine individual, and many people spend weary seasons trying to overcome obstinacies which are due to inadequate breaking or making without understanding that the horse has never been taught what is required of him.

Most books devoted to the gentle art of educating horses begin with an assumption that you have a lot of skilled people
and a lot of time, the conveniences of a covered school, and an establishment of semi-military splendour.

Actually horses are bred on farms, broken and made by far less happily circumstanced individuals. Sometimes this works well; occasionally it is disastrous, according to the personal equation of the breaker.

There are many methods of breaking, which can be roughly grouped into the systems of the American and European schools. The classic English method is undoubtedly excellent in its full development, but I rather think that the American method is simpler and speedier than the English system, unless this latter is very thoroughly carried out.
The period of training laid down in the Army for remounts represents the English system at its best and fullest. The ordinary civilian horse only gets a much shorter version of this training. The Army lays down no specific period, but the Manual of Horsemastership states that “the training of a horse which joins a unit under five years old should take at least twelve months . . . divided into three stages of about equal length.”

If we did this in civil life it would add a good deal to the expense of rearing, and this is quite high enough as it is, for you have to feed the foal for the first two years and do it jolly well. Figures are misleading things, but you have to charge something against the farm for the foal. If you take these subsequent figures as production costs you will not be very far wrong, for they represent the average of three establishments expressed not with precision, but to the nearest round figures in shillings.

First year: From 1st May, mare and foal, six months at 8s. a week; foal only (the mare reverting to keep at 5s.), first winter 8s. a week .. .. .. 28 16 o

Second year: Summer half-year at 6s., some corn; winter half-year at 7s., more corn .. 20 10 o

Third year: Grass and hay alone at 5s. a week .. 13 0 0

Fourth year: Grass and hay alone at 5s. a week .. 13 0 0

Total cost in food .. .. 75 6 0

The cost of elementary education depends on the time taken, and this is usually six weeks to two months. It can be taken as adding rather more than a five-pound note to the bill—about six
pounds ten is a fair allocation. Then there is the original cost
of blood, the stallion's and groom's fees to be added in, and it
is improbable that the four years will have passed without a
little veterinary attention and a few medicines, such as worm
pills. There is also the farrier. The proper cost of producing
and educating one young horse, therefore, comes out between
ninety and one hundred pounds. Perhaps it can be done a little
cheaper; we ought also to put aside a little as returned to the
land, but even so it does not allow a very wide tolerance for
additional expenditure. Any additional education has to come as
a post-graduate course, and it is expensive in terms of keep and
time. In addition, you take all the risk of failure, accident, or
illness over four years.

The virtue of the American breaking method is that it is, if
properly carried out, a quick way of shortening the amount of
time needed for elementary handling. A three-year-old has a lot
to learn, and though the owner may be prepared to train his
young horse himself, he may not feel up to the task of breaking it.
There are two good reasons: first it is unpleasant to be thrown
(as well as economically unwise); second, it is very bad for the
horse to get the better of the rider—it gives the animal ideas not
too easily eradicated. In the English system the horse is long-
reined, and gradually brought under control to the point where
he may somewhat perilously be mounted. In the American
system he is taught as a first lesson that the human is the con-
troller.

It is a rather startling proceeding for orthodox eyes, for it
depends in essence on casting the horse as a preliminary, but a
special tackle is used with special soft kneecaps and no harm is
done. Accident is exceptionally rare. The tackle consists of
School Days

a ringed surcingle through which a rope runs to a hobble on the
near fore. The youngster who tries to break away, to all
intents and purposes throws himself by his own effort; that is
to say, he comes down on his knees, leverage exerted by the
rope against his off haunch rolling him gently over. He may
make efforts to rise, but soon begins to realise the inevitability
of the situation. He is then treated to "normal alarms."
Sheets of newspaper are brandished and allowed to blow down­
wind. Stones are rattled in a tin, even shots may be fired or
dogs encouraged to jump on or over the victim. Alarm soon
vanishes, and the pupil gets used to being handled. The
amount of mental disturbance produced by this circus is as­
tonishingly little. Ridiculous as it seems, the recumbent victim,
having endured alarms and yielded, will contentedly eat sugar
while cast. Three separate horses I tested in this manner, and
I must confess that even the most excitable of them was per­
fecfly nonchalant after its first hour of crowded experience.

The next step is teaching them to stop when you say "whoa."
Many English horses never seem to have learnt this at all. They
may be stopped with the bit or held, but a real proper standstill
is seemingly beyond them, particularly at the covert side. Now,
from the point of view of educating a horse, teaching him to be
stationary first is an enormous advantage. After all, it is the first
essential with the human recruit too. "Whoa" is learnt from a
modification of the casting rope arranged as long reins through
the surcingle to the hobbles. The first few times the pull may
have to be enough to bring the horse to his knees; soon he asso­
ciates "whoa" with restraint, and very soon the word alone halts
him. He is taught not to pull against his halter by a rope device,
which tightens round his tummy when he backs away. He is
bitted with a light snaffle, and long-reined on it. After his experiences with noises, paper, and handling, putting a saddle on inspires no alarm. He is quietly mounted in the stable, and in the normal course of events can be ridden on the road in quiet traffic inside a week.

He is not a finished or trained horse, but he is in a condition to be handled by intelligent amateurs and places more reliance on his human friends than the English-trained horse does at a far later stage of development. He has, however, no idea how to carry his head, and he has yet to be fully trained in movement, and from now on his training must be on the English system or such modification of it as you care to apply.

All breaking depends very much on how it is done than on any merits in the "system." The American method, the Beery system, is, so to speak, a civilised up-to-date version of the old Rarey method, and it is very widely employed not only in the States, but in most of our Dominions. One of its manifest advantages is that if later a horse develops some bad habit, you know the system on which he was educated, and you can work back to the first principles and proceed to teach him or counter the habit on lines of associated ideas or experiences which you know he knows.

With a horse broken by "young somebody" you have very little ground for clear reasoning. His tutor may have made his wishes felt in some way not perhaps too clear even to the rider himself, and it is ten to one you are wholly in the dark about it.

Indignant votaries of the English country, as distinct from Army, system explain that they often break a young horse and mount him the same day or even get straight on his back without any of the theatrical accompaniment of the American
system. I quite agree that this can often easily be done, largely perhaps owing to fatigue or native kindliness on the part of the horse; but, to my mind, any system which at least pretends to be a series of orderly considered steps towards its end object is preferable to an incoherent opportunism. It is so easy to make a bad educational error with a young horse—he will not forget it even if you do—that the more systematic method is inevitably preferable. Anyhow, it can be said that the Beery ideas are logical in theory and work well in practice. Whether we are justified in assuming that the theory of equine psychology on which they are based is accurate is another affair altogether. It is a question of dogma open to infinite argument, but at least it aims at reducing to very simple system and ordered thought a great deal which our own school fails to express as clearly.

From a practical point of view, if you are an amateur and raise a horse or two without any very heavy personnel to deal with them, the Beery system has every advantage. Your kindly but undisciplined youngster becomes in a week a more or less manageable unit of the family. He or she is still "a young horse" subject to all waywardness and not yet a trustable mount with children or unskilled horsemen, but it can at least be treated as mere inflammable material rather than as a potential keg of dynamite.

If anybody asks me whether I have real faith in the system, I can only answer that, in spite of a crippling attack of lumbago plus a touch of sciatica, I rode my three-year-old till the day her girl trainer pronounced her triable. This was the fifth day of treatment. We met hens, motor-cars, goats, motor-cycles, and all the common objects of the countryside. Much to my physical anguish and mental exhilaration, we even did a little jump. Now,
if you have ever had lumbago you will know the strength of faith I have in the idea.

Still, whatever line of education you favour, it depends in the end wholly on the personality of the teacher. I do not think that it is possible to dismiss the personal element because, however good a "system," a lot depends on the personal handling. It is not simply a question of having read the book and got the tackle. It requires horse-sense and that obscure gift of teaching which is just as important with animals as with children.
In the same way just as much depends on the temperament of the horse. Some start amenably and are easy; others have formed habits which are troublesome to eradicate. A bit of a fuss is probably only a natural temporary manifestation, but it is very important to eliminate bad habits, such as undue freedom with the heels, during training. It is these habits which largely control the time needed to break a horse. A mild grass-fed pony may be broken, bitted, and hunted in a week; a usual three-quarter-bred hunter takes a fortnight or perhaps ten days to reach a reliable standard. Once the preliminaries are over, there is a dreadful temptation to “see what he can do.” Counsel of perfection is not to try these paces, but to walk him solidly for a month or so.

In the end you have your beautiful horse bred to your selection, mannered according to your skill. You may perhaps be a perfect nagsman; it is, however, a rather rare accomplishment, but you have made your horse and you must sit on it. Perhaps temptation will come your way and you will be offered much fine gold. You may sell, perhaps, to great advantage, but, oddly enough, you will be aware that you have sold more than the horse. Something of yourself will go with it.
Professor Pony
Professor Pony

Of course a child should have a pony.
There are some poor children who do not possess so much as a leg of a pony. Others sharing a pony in the family are able to say, "We have got a pony." Best and most fortunate of all are those who can say, "I have got a pony," and on occasion one comes across children who have several ponies. Most of these are dealers' children. In fact, if there is any great display of opulence, you can be pretty sure that the father dealt in something.

Now why should a child have a pony? The answer is that it is one of the few character-forming survivals that the education cranks have not been able to spoil. If we consider the infinite range of classes and courses we pour into our expensive brats, and how remarkably little they get out of them, a pony is dead cheap.

Let us put the case brutally to the flinching parent. You fondly consider John to be a little gentleman and Betty a little lady. They enjoy certain distinctions of caste, breeding, and position. Yet what is the oldest of all real distinctions between class and mass? Unarguably horsemanship. Cheval—chivalry. The Spanish for "man" is hombre; the Spanish for "gentleman" caballero, horseman. Ability to ride is socially desirable for Betty, and if John ever gets into Sandhurst, of course he must be able to ride. If he goes abroad it is vital, for, in spite of petrol, travel is still by horse where there are no roads, and where sport is concerned horses alone are considered.
Cheval—chivalry.
Next comes, perhaps, health. Well, there is nothing on which the medical profession is in entire agreement except that horse exercise is wholly beneficial. As a matter of fact, there is a good deal more to it for children than just that. It is splendid growing exercise, for the whole body is energised, and it does not develop gross deposits of unsightly muscle where girls do not want them. Above all, it is an exercise which is wholly unavoidable. Many children prefer half a pound of sweets and a "shocker" to any form of exercise, and it keeps the adults fully occupied to see that the little dears get any. The pony introduces an irrevocable element. Fresh air and exercise is inevitable, and the school-room temper is inordinately improved.

Then there is the moral factor. A pony treated as a pony and not as a conveyance becomes an individual personality no less important than the dog. Children who may be thoughtless or selfish actually begin to think for someone besides themselves. Responsibility is called into being, and lastly, they learn how to control and govern another creature. As prowess develops they come into mild competition with others, and after taking for a time an "among-those-present" attitude at gymkhanas, they suddenly wake up and develop will-to-win. Having tasted success in the pony field, they are quite likely to throw the same fiery energy into some aspect of their schoolwork and astonish parents and teachers by a display of unsuspected pertinacity and hard work.

Against the pony the parent urges hazard and expense. Well, ponies are not dangerous—indeed, are far, far safer than the usual risk of being in a motor-car. A few falls may be expected when jumping is being learnt, but they are quite harmless affairs, and learning that coming off does not hurt is part of the essential
education. With reasonable precaution, spills are very few and quite harmless.

On the score of expense there is no reason for alarm, for a quite good children's pony can be acquired for between ten and twenty pounds, and will fetch as much money when it is outgrown. Summer keep is a matter of half a crown a week, winter keep not a great deal more, provided that the pony is not clipped but kept "out" and rough. A very little corn will be needed when the pony is in work during the holidays, and children from eleven upwards can perfectly easily look after their own ponies.

Personally, I believe whole-heartedly in this system, but it needs supervision at first, and there must always be some adult who can give a hand to keep an eye on things. With a rough pony there is not a great deal to do beyond saddling, feeding and watering and seeing that hooves are picked out, but saddlery has to be cleaned and some pretence of grooming is desirable. What actually happens is that the pony becomes a toy and a permanent occupation, a convenient means of local transport and a beloved companion.

"But we have no stables!" For a rough pony this is not important, for it is seldom in the stable. Any shed will serve. The first essentials are a paddock and a water supply of some kind: either a pond, or really big rainwater butts or tanks, for small children cannot easily carry big buckets of water to thirsty ponies. The small country house, even if it is barely more than a weekend cottage, usually boasts a paddock. If not, pasturage must be acquired, but half the value of a pony is lost if it is not about the place and not under its owner's eye.

It is not putting the cart before the horse to insist that the children should be properly taught to ride first. This does not
A GREAT DISPLAY OF OPULENCE
mean reaching the stage where they can sit on a pony at a trot without falling off, but getting to the point where even if they have little real control over a hard-mouthed riding-school pony, they have learnt not to hang on the reins, are able to jump a ditch and a low pole without being unseated, and know how to put on their own saddlery.

There must always be a grown-up to give an eye to things.

In the actual course of events, children do not really have time to "do" their own ponies properly every day. There are always interruptions in the shape of parties, classes, or visits which make a regular time-table quite hopeless. Nevertheless, so long as they have the pony, like the car, brought round to the front door for them and everything done for them, they will not learn very much and they will lose two-thirds of the real education their pony is prepared to give them. They should learn how to feed, bed-down,
tie up, clean gear and stables, know how to mix a mash and develop an eye for anything wrong. Above all, they should be responsible, and though adults are always in the background to give a hand and to supervise matters, an eleven-year-old can be quite a competent horse-keeper if started on light duty in the summer with a grass-fed pony in the paddock.

Hunting is rather different. There must always be a grown-up to give an eye to things and negotiate difficult gates, and when the child comes in it is probably hungry, wet and tired. Later they can undertake the essential duty of “seeing to the horse first,” but in practice it is better with children that the gardener or someone relieves them of immediate duty. They can see the pony watered, off-saddled, and given its mash, but any heavier labour should be carried out by others and cleaning gear postponed until next day.
Mode and the Moss-Trooper
PERSON of insight once declared that hunting owed its popularity to sources quite other than those usually admitted. The three basic elements of its appeal were that it involved:

(a) Beautiful horses.
(b) Special clothes.
(c) It was dangerous.

Therefore it was argued it embodied three of the best "thrills" of social life, and could not help being pre-eminently smart and enjoyable.

I have known women devote several seconds' deep thought to this summary—and then change the conversation.

A man who hunts modestly, but parades—oh, exquisitely, admitted that it was difficult to turn out perfectly several days a week without additional help. "I have to have two men to clean the horses. One, it is true, doubles the part as second horseman—but then I simply have to have another to clean me!"

A woman who turns out just as well, but admittedly not so often, contrives it with a compound groom-gardener and a Scotch housemaid. She is Scotch too.

Dressing and undressing Sir Jasper Secondbart is worth setting to music. Relays of valets pounce on him as if he was a sort of professional footballer, and he is literally divested of his
Hard Up on Pegasus

glory. It is rather a glorious contrast to Tony Hard Up. He hacks home, puts on a stable jacket and rubber boots, and does his own horse down himself. Then if the animal does not "break out" he has time for a bite for himself, and he then begins to clean his saddlery and spends most of the next day on his clothes. Hunting twice a week on a horse he alleges he bought on the instalment system, thus keeps him fully occupied except on two afternoons when he has to stay at home to feed his horse or take it with him for exercise.

Not for nothing is young Ben Gall known as "The Moss-trooper." He is impecunious on both sides of the family (by Irish out of Debt), but as he puts it, "something can be done!" By this he means somebody, and a loan to Ben is farewell to property. However, by borrowing, with or without the owners' leave, and by dint of the eminent misfit emporium near Covent Garden, he turns out like a spring morning. Anybody's oldest rags look quite respectable on him, and he has that odd knack of neatness which distinguishes the improvident who have to improvise. But as he sadly says, "It may last out the meet, but Lord help these safety-pins the first lep we get." It is on record that he saved his graceless neck by going through the crown of the top-hat borrowed on an off-day from the village undertaker. Funerals have never seemed quite the same to me since, for the hat bearing testimony to the adventure is still a feature in our parish.

Dealing with masculine attire, tradition would doubtless put breeches first—but this was before ladies began to ride astride. However, there is no alternative. The novice must acquire breeches that fit, and enough of them for his needs and those of the laundry. They should be moulded to the knee, not by
PUTS ON A STABLE JACKET AND RUBBER BOOTS, AND DOES HIS OWN HORSE DOWN HIMSELF
immediate violent wear in the saddle, but by wearing them solemnly and in strict privacy for half an hour or so in the evening until a little freedom of movement occurs from the stretching of the cloth. Breaking in a covey of pants is a serious affair, but will save a lot of irritation later. Excellent as your tailor’s cut of a seat may be, your own in the saddle may be less secure. Nothing gives moral support like riding-boots. You may, if a practised nagsman, take fences neatly in mere trousers. It can be done in plus fours, but there is a sense of loss of grip or the harsh tweed scrapes your knees inside. The neatly-fitting riding-breeches, the sombre glow of semi-stiff riding-boots, are not for show alone—they help you to stick on the horse. They are essentials, part of the make-up of the true centaur, secrets of the craft. You will remember that the real centaur was only human from the middle upwards; just so it is the lower half which is important for combat and security. The Olympians knew this.

Fashion is all-important. Once men wore mahogany tops to their boots, then they wore about ten inches of rough white buckskin very dressy and very good for clinging on with. This was rightly recognised by the poet:

Buckskin’s the only wear fit for the saddle;
Hats for Hyde Park, but a cap for the chase.
In tops of black leather let fishermen paddle,
The calves of the foxhunter white ones incase.

Buckskin breeches are excellent, but you have to have yet another man, preferably a very old, nearly extinct soldier, to clean them, and they are now obsolete. The cap, a stout affair of velvet or a modern point-to-point crash helmet, is reserved for officials past and present, and little girls showing off dealers’ ponies, and
Nothing gives moral support like riding-boots.
experience has proved that the top-hat is not only safer to fall into, but far, far funnier. Some things may have changed in the hunting-field, sir, but, thank goodness, we still have our sense of humour! As the little Australian lidy said, "A proper bongo in a topper is a crumb, ain't it?" and we let Americans write the subtitles on our films without going all out for the rich speech of our glorious Empire!

You can do with one horse, but one hat is not enough. One for hunting and one for weddings is almost an essential—but it can be done by careful people on one.

A modern poet has it:

My hat!
Hunts thrice a week,
And that
Without a leak,
Worn without string,
Wedding bells ring—
Worn with a band,
Back to the land!
My hat!
Oh, my hat!

(This is anon. I do not want to make Humbert Wolfe jealous.)

Still, boots, pants and a hat are not all, though they go a long way towards McTaggart's ideal of the forward seat. It is the Alpha and the Omega of it, anyway. Before leaving boots I ought to mention cold feet. They are as prevalent in the hunting-field as ever. (Some people believe in half-inch soles, others in spiritual comfort, and some of the richer people in Leicestershire have, I hear, been experimenting with little foot-warmers under
each stirrup, but the horses have not taken to them very well.)

The best cure for cold feet is to get off and walk, but it arouses
comment, and most people will prefer to make some other excuse.
A good way is to shout, "Wire!" and pretend someone said it
and you said, "Where?"

Above the pants is a waistcoat. This should be gay and, above
all, prodigiously weatherproof. Above this comes the stock, now
invariably white, but once a natty bird's-eye pattern on blue.

Exactly when the stock came in I do not know, but it is not
traditional. A neat bow tied twice round the neck was right a
century ago, and bows of various types endured till the sixties.
The stock is rather more practical and looks more arrogant and
less Bohemian, but a scrutiny of old prints suggests that in the
fifties there was a wonderful tolerance of neckwear. Bows,
double bows of blue bird's-eye, scarves passed through a massive
tie-ring, gargantuan single bows, all these were worn one time or
another. Alas for white modernity!

Lastly comes the coat, black or technically tailor's grey for
modest agriculturists, pink for people of standing. In any case, if you insist on wearing pink before you have done two seasons, avoid putting both feet in it by appearing in plain buttons. Those off the family livery may be a bit rococo. The tailor may prove a broken reed and suggest plain brass, probably because he thinks it is rather appropriate to you; but it is better to wait and be correct than be gay in raiment and a quiet joke to the rest of the field. It is quite possible to hunt in neat funeral attire, and as it saves relays of white cords, tops to boots, and a great deal of cleaning, it can be recommended in a sticky clay country. Undeniably it is less impressive than regulation pink and rather depressing to the clothes-conscious mind, but it has domestic merits.

Pink shows astonishing variations in cut and no real change in colour through the hunting age. At times it has been a high-waisted cutaway, then fashion has veered to a Prince Albert type of frock. Sometimes it has given protection to the nether limbs. This, I think, more in the days of modern puff-sleeved riding-pants than in the leg-conscious days of the Georgians when buckskin fitted tight. We have variations to double and single breasts, coaching cuffs and roll collars. Sometimes the latter vanishes to a strip, sometimes it is prodigiously wide. A good tailor always knows the latest mode, not necessarily its practical discomforts. Commit yourself to his hands and fight, if necessary, for breathing space despite perfection.

As to ladies' kit—that demands a volume to itself, although progress tends to abbreviation. The apron of 1838 was a pall which, when the rider was in the saddle, hung barely eighteen inches from the ground. The apron of today is like the vermiform appendix, purely vestigial; a decade from now it may have
vanished with the veil, wide pommels, and other inexplicable conservatisms. But as the *Ladies' Equestrian Guide* of 1838 puts it, "not one in a thousand of my readers will ever aspire to follow hounds, so it is unnecessary to say anything about jumping!"

That authoress ought to see the field today!
Mares’ Nests
Mares' Nests

There is no subject (always with the reverend exception of religion) which is quite so well furnished with mares' nests as the classic subject of Horse. This is perhaps delightfully appropriate, but the real trouble about mares' nests is that they do not hatch foals but most elaborate and expensive misconceptions. If you have lots of money and horses are to you properties rather than persons, you can afford to have an enormous rookery of mares' nests and pay a big staff and their satellites incredible sums for protecting it. If, on the other hand, you are impecunious and wish to keep a modest horse or so for personal pleasure, then mares' nests become astonishingly important.

You will find beyond all peradventure that the number of things people will tell you not to do far outnumber any useful tips you may gather on what to do. A goodly number of the "don'ts" are mares' nests. Some are fairly harmless and innocent, others are good old hard-boiled sittings from the classic days when the riders trained on port and foundered their horses in the modish manner. The most dangerous of all are those which have some truth in them, but only if their precepts are flouted to excess.

Perhaps the best way of testing the plausibility of a mare's nest is to forget for the moment that the horse you are considering is a hunter and look at the proposition from the standpoint of plain horse as used in some other part of the world.

Take, for instance, floor mangers. These, according to a very useful mare's nest, lead to colic and eating bedding. All stables should have proper breast-high mangers and hayracks, you will
be told. This is complete bunkum, for the horse in nature grazes, and if a horse eats bedding the only remedy likely to be really effective is to bed with peat moss, sawdust, or tan. As to the hayrack, it scatters seed badly; it is, if accessible from an overhead loft

Take, for instance, floor mangers.

with trap-door, often a pestilent source of draught instead of ventilation, and it has nothing to recommend it. A nice easily cleaned floor manger built of concrete, and cement faced, is far better than the usual shelf, and a hay net which can be hung anywhere is a more than adequate substitute for a manger, and presents some economy, as there is no wastage.
The modern very up-to-date dairy-farm type of building and equipment makes excellent stabling, and as model farms often precede a "bust" and a sale, fine ranges of modern cow-houses are often more easily found than really up-to-date stabling. The partitioned fittings are easily removed. A little concrete filling here and there and a few ring-bolts convert superfine cow-sheds into really roomy, healthy loose-boxes. The permanent gravity-fed water supply may be partly retained, for permanent water supply is, despite another traditional mare's nest, not a bad thing in a stable.

There are all kinds and sizes of mare's nest. People will assure you solemnly that sugar leads to crib-biting and that carrots should be given instead. If this were so, all French army horses would eat their cribs, for sugar and molasses form a substantial portion of their ration. As a matter of fact, sugar is an excellent pick-me-up for a tired horse—even lawn tennis professionals eat it—while raw carrots, though popular, produce in many horses, if given in any but strictly limited quantities, exactly those symptoms of temporary dyspepsia which they would produce in a tennis pro.

Then there are matters of colour. Some special markings of horses are regarded with deep suspicion as being external symptoms of inherent weakness. White socks are held by some to be an affliction bespeaking unsound pasterns. The dark mark along the spine which you see in some buckskins and clay banks—anglice, yellow-dun—is held to be a sign of endurance. But when you look into the matter you find that one country's cherished mares' nests are completely ignored by another's. Most unlucky signs in a Barb, prophetic stigmata which no Arab from Mecca to Marrakesh would ignore, are held to be signs of positive virtue.
and good omen by his brother horseman of the Western Hemisphere. Even neighbours do not agree. The Moors hold a chestnut the best of colours, perhaps because the Prophet’s mare was one. The Spaniards, on the other hand, contend that the chestnut is of a—well, less desirable nature, “Caballo ruano para las putas!” So far as science is concerned, variations in pigmentation are not guides to either strength or weakness. On the other hand, where a foal throws back very strongly to the markings of a celebrated ancestor, it is only human to hope that he has inherited all the other qualities too, and that the particular blaze or marking is the outward and visible sign of an inward Mendelian grace.

Nothing will, however, eliminate the dark superstitions of stud grooms, and we still meet the individual who has the Friesian cattle pushed out of sight of the equine marriage ceremony on the ground that he does not want any “blanked piebalds” on his books. He holds that the last visual object noted at the moment...
Mares' Nests

may affect the future foal, but like those human mothers who virtu­
ously improve and beautify their minds (or what they call their
minds) in the interests of the unborn but expected infant, the
natal psychical influence is unproven. The physical element of
good nourishment leading to a quiet and contented mind is,
however, indispensable. Maternal impression has no scientific
basis, but it is a good old mare's nest going back to Jacob
(Genesis xxx. 31-43).

On the other hand, your chances of a male foal are not quite so
good as those of a filly. Out of two hundred foals there will be
103 fillies to 97 males, and this has no relation to the hot or cold
months, as is the case with rats. Their September litters should
show 122 males to 100 females, while December litters go down
to 88 males to 122 bitches!

Another hoary mare's nest is the doctrine of "telegony,"
which is to say that a mare always shows in her foals the influence
of her first husband. Many animal breeders still believe that an
early mésalliance may spoil an animal for life. If your spaniel
bitch has her first litter as the result of an illicit affair with a bull
terrier, they will hold that even though subsequently mated to a
spaniel dog of impeccable pedigree, a dash of bull terrier will tend
to show itself on occasion in the legitimate spaniel families.
Farmers will talk quite seriously (far more seriously than they
would about a human affair) of having a pedigree cow "ruined"
by a neighbour's bull of different breed. But actually there is
nothing in the theory, and the filly's early indiscretions with a
cart-horse stallion or a jack donkey, embarrassing as they are at
the time, are of no account in so far as future prospects of making
an honest woman of her are concerned.
Woolworth Horses
THERE is, I believe, a theory that equitation is one of the gentle arts. This is all wrong. It is not gentle, and the only connection it has with the arts is that it is such a nebulous subject that you cannot explain it, and you can argue about it till all is blue. In simpler physical exercises, involving the human animal alone, there is usually a right and a wrong way of doing things. In riding we have (utterly as saddle pundits ignore it) to take into consideration the horse. If it fits you, all may be well; if it does not, you will ride with less hope of being able to show off.

Horse people as a whole are vain, censorious, and consumed with envy. They never give you credit for the miracle which jumped you back into the saddle after you had been jumped out of it. They will censor you for not having dropped your hands at a jump, ignoring that a secure grip on the reins and their attachments alone allowed you to move in belated harmony with your mount, whose decision was taken later than your own!

One horse will leap swallow-like, easily and smoothly; another, cautious with experience, will survey the other side of the fence with a marked and disconcerting pause before rising. On the first you are a polished and successful equestrian; on the second you have to ride a great deal better if you are going to get away with it at all. Cheap horses—well, they invoke drawbacks. It would be nicer to have better ones.

Consider the case of that dashing horsewoman, Mrs. Myopia. She rides jolly well, sometimes wears her glasses, more often does
not. As a physical fact that good lady never has seen with any distinctness any fence she has ridden at. She certainly has never seen the other side of one till over, for she is so short-sighted that she can't. She sees a blurred out-of-focus sort of thing, but excitement and a knowledgeable horse carry her to triumph. If you watch her she apparently does the right thing at the right time. Actually she does, but she gets her information from the horse and its muscular action rather than from vision or conscious thought on her own part. A good, expensive horse is her insurance.

It is very depressing to authoritative ring-masters with a proper theory of equitation, but it is a consoling thought that in a partnership between horse and human we can, if not too liberal-minded about text-books, leave such a lot to the horse. It is really wonderful what a lot of sense some horses can display. I know an iron-mouthed veteran who once pulled an officer's mess cart (he still curvets in a sergeanty kind of way at the sight of a perambulator) who takes an inexperienced lady hunting. She has no control of the animal at all—in fact nobody has, for even if ridden in a gag he gets a chin down against his chest, arches a magnificent neck, and continues unabated until one cries, "Halt." A military voice is essential with this horse. The dulcet, feminine tone has no effect at all. Yet the R.S.M. has hunted regularly, carrying his wholly inexperienced freight, who has really enjoyed it. The R.S.M. chose his gates and his fences, went well, was never sick or sorry, and only revealed his total command of the situation by pushing aside the field while coming up to have a spot of gossip with other horses that he knew and liked.

It is perhaps a little embarrassing to be pursued by a relative
stranger on a single-minded horse, but if you knew the horse you knew the explanation, and the rider was disarmingly frank in her apology. Anyway, the R.S.M. is such a matey beast that it was impossible for anyone, unless wholly devoid of a sense of humour, to be in any doubt about the rider’s total innocence of guilt.

The R.S.M. is perhaps an extreme case, for he was a horse with a robust sense of humour, essentially a cheery, hail-fellow-well-met, lovable animal. He hunted like a farmer hunts—for sheer love of the thing, unembarrassed by the cold looks of inferior superiors. Most horses simply follow other horses, but the R.S.M., probably with good parade-ground training, had his own idea of where he ought to be. He was an executive horse. “Follow me!” he would wuff to more refined but less single-minded animals. They might be speedier, but how seldom they had his decision, his brisk command of the situation, his eye for easy country! There were disadvantages if he had a rider up who had a will of his own. The R.S.M. did not yield easily to the suggestions of mere riders—but for a novice what a horse!

He is now out of livery and has a delightful job as estate horse and occasional hunter. From a polite point of view—that is to say, what other people think—he was wholly deplorable, a vulgar, iron-mouthed, coarse brute. As an individual he was charming, a lovable horse, and, after all, there are few of us who do not wish old troopers a happier close of life than the Fates usually give them.

In a small country they make a poor man’s hunter, and if they enjoy life as well as some I have known, it is no bad retirement for an old servant of the State. Of course, it is rather unfashionable to have fought in a war or reluctantly taken a normal citizen’s
risks for one's country, but however reactionary and blackguardly it may be to have committed the error of soldiering and have been a pander to militarism instead of a League of Nations Gussie, one cannot honestly blame the horses. Personally, when I see the Government brand, I feel rather kindly toward a fellow-sufferer. My contract with the publisher has a clause about anything
libellous or scandalous. This debars me from expressing a very hearty opinion about the Gussies.

“You do not seriously mean that you can hunt on an ex-trooper?”

“Yes, you pompous imbecile. If you have only a few pounds filched from the tax collector, a good hairy is huntable.”

“Unspeakable vulgarian, iconoclast—how?”

Well, as a matter of cold fact the animal is primarily up to weight or it would not be a Service plug. Next, it has preconceived views on feeding which you may have to alter. It does not always thrive when first out to grass, but it gets back to civilian standards if looked after. Then it probably has a weary Service mouth, but that is often curable. Lastly, there is some weakness somewhere, but it does not follow that it will affect its utility for your modest needs. You buy a screw at, say, twelve pounds, but you have a made horse which, with a little care and deep and considerate thinking, can be made to serve your needs. You will not get a humming bird for fourpence, as the Jew said when the customer complained of moths in a fur coat, but you may get a trusty old reliable, and if you manage it well you may enjoy, not fast riding, but the far more satisfying joy of hunting. You may, if fortunate, get something nearly really good—say, an “officer’s charger” in reduced circumstances. You will normally get something mediocre (but beggars can’t be choosers), or you may get embarrassment, though this is unlikely.

Generally speaking, an ex-Army horse in fair repair is a good investment for a negligible capital outlay. Take “Aurora,” now. She was sold for eight pounds with a noise like tube lifts in her chest. She was tubed and ridden by her lady owner, and made a marvellous success at show-jumping. She then proceeded to
Olympia, and again in her owner’s hands performed so well that when the Fates were against England and all Weedon out of the running, she yet held place, and only one unlucky touch with a gate which wibble-wobbled along its peg to disaster cost her victory. She was a temperamental mare, but how wholly gallant-hearted!

It is something of a brave endeavour to bring up an old Army mare from the depths of West Sussex, and for an amateur to ride her with any hope at Olympia. But it was done, and the experiment was quite justifiable, for her performance was wholly up to the needed standard. One cannot even say it was as if she was out of her class, for the celebrated “broncho” and other jumpers are or were, after all, Army horses. In their imposing surroundings we sometimes tend to forget that they, too, were once quite undistinguished remounts, and that every remount carried the possibility of a show-jumper’s tackpole in its nosebag.

Had the Fates been kind she might have done better the following year, but a yew grew in summer to overhang her paddock, and she ate and died. Regret is useless. “Aurora” was turbulent, not too dependable, yet with her queer ways a personality, a definite character, proud, sensitive, fine and powerful. She was lovely and exciting to ride, with that deep ripple of muscle under the saddle-flaps; she would make her gambit of heel-flinging perversity, and look round to see if you were still there, but she was not vicious. Her waywardness was simply excess of power and spirits, and I mourn her untimely ending still.

Nothing is more mysterious about horses than wind, and the horse which “makes a noise” is occasionally worth attention. It is something of an opportunity for the enforced economist, for the veterinary profession as a whole are completely unable to
advise the layman whether a slight noise will get worse or stay put. Wind may, they say, improve, but this never really happens. It is much more marked when the horse is soft than when he is in hard condition, and a mount which is useless for a going country may yet prove perfectly useful for a modest country if you are prepared to put up with the disability. A good, capable hunter "making a noise" is not to be entirely discarded by the pauper, but is not to be recommended to the novice.

Some make a noise when beginning, but getting a second wind go well; others are irredeemable, but if you can buy soundness in other respects, experience, weight capacity, and a good mouth for a low figure, there are still virtues in the whistler, though none in the genuinely broken-winded horse. The transaction is purely speculative, and the higher up towards the horse's head the source of noise appears to be, the more favourable the prognosis.

From a practical point of view, if a horse does not make a noise when standing after a gallop but only when going, he is still capable of use. If he blows, roars, and wheezes at a standstill, he is too far gone, as one cannot hear hounds.

The cause of the unsoundness is very variable and not too well understood. If it were a human ailment, remedial measures would probably be rather more advanced.

The real point is the degree of distress caused to the horse. If it is not noticeable on the "second wind," you are clear of that miserable feeling that you are oppressing the poor beast. Enthusiasts will tell you that it is wrong to summer a noisy animal at grass. The noise will get worse. In point of fact, so far as my experience goes, it does not, but a noisy horse has to be kept in hard condition to reduce the ailment to unnoticeable proportions.

When they come up soft they are noisy—when you rough
them off at the end of the season the noise increases again, and nose-running is a frequent symptom. Linseed oil is probably as good a gargle as anything, but nothing but surgery (Hobdaying) will abate the confirmed case.

It is rather dreadful to ride a noisy horse unless one is sure that it is not a matter of very serious embarrassment to the animal. It is certain to be an embarrassment to you, because it is a wholly unmistakable and betraying noise, and people look rather snobby about it; but on the whole I believe a horse would rather continue slow-motion hunting with this noise than be sent to the kennels. I have no illusions about this, for I have a horse who makes a noise. He faces hill climbs on the Downs with raucous breathings, and I say to myself how wicked I am to let the poor animal suffer. The poor animal, on the other hand, says, so far as I can understand him, “Bit short of breath, govnor—not too young—but there’s Hounds!” Plump, greedy, and contented, interested only in food and hunting, I do not believe that the old slug bothers much. He is not a nice horse—in fact, he is rather a non-forthcoming horse—but despite his lamentable bellows he seems to enjoy life clumsily and heartily. He would not last five minutes in a fast country, but he is inexpensive, and he works well and loves it in his more modest surroundings. I have no illusions about him. He will hack like creeping bryony or a condemned man on his way to Tyburn Tree, but when it is hunting, he does gay galumphs in a cumbersome manner, and shows not only interest but arch pleasure. Having been a Hunt horse in his past, he believes that his proper place is just behind hounds, and if he gets there we feel pomp, understanding and circumstance in the equine brain.

I am afraid that he has little faith in us humans, and has been
badly treated in the past. A year of petting has soothed him a bit, but he is always still doubtful what strange people are going to do to him, and his balance of mind between bullying me for sugar or linseed cake is still poised against an inferiority complex born of bad treatment. He is a cheap hunter, and he has carried me well enough to repay me in pleasure what he cost.

The disadvantages of the very cheap horses are their tendencies to go mouldy from some trouble or other, or to have some
incurable vice. Attempts to cure this have usually spoilt their mouths and their tempers. I would certainly never buy one except for two reasons: firstly, I can’t afford anything better; secondly, I can nearly always invent some futile redeeming quality which makes me believe a horse is better than he is. I do not know that horses exactly reciprocate this misplaced affection, but I think that what you get out of a horse is often a reflection of your own attitude. I have known world-weary equine pessimists cheer up wonderfully with a little petting, and very often the unsuspected causes of unsatisfactory behaviour are physical. There may be worms, an invisible invasion, or there may be sharp edges on the grinding teeth. A course of tonic worm powders and the use of the rasp allay the causes of irritability, and with the recovery of physical tone you get a far more amenable, happier horse.

As to hunting on these inferior creatures, generations of subalterns have proved that it can be done, and less dashing, rather older, civilians may find in a retired trooper a solution of the insoluble.
A Platonic Dialogue
A Platonic Dialogue

HAVE hunting people got a sense of humour?
Yes, a very sensitive one.
Why are they so sensitive?
Because they have small feet.
Why have they small feet?
Because for generations they never walked—they rode.
Can they ride now?
Eat your damn bun.

This is, of course, no fair way to close a promising discussion, but you know what children are—persistent, yes, persistent. The real trouble is that there is no definition of riding which is wholly explicit. As a lowest common denominator, I think that anyone who can adhere to a fairly quiet horse at all the paces and over obstacles may be said to be able to ride.

Riding well is much more difficult. To be universally admitted to ride well is very nearly impossible, for action and reaction are equal and opposite. It is almost too much to expect a highly critical and wholly partisan public to admit both seat and hands without a qualifying "but."

I find on examination of conscience that I have fallen off horses at every pace—the walk, trot, canter, gallop and leap; at the lope, paseo, volta, by the buck direct, by sun-fishing. I have even been knocked down while standing on the ground, so I have lots of experience. As to hands, I have theoretically had both amputated quite high up. It saves a lot of discussion, and one can get along quite well without them.
When the incandescence aroused by this silly remark has died down to a mere red-hot glow of disapprobation, let me remind you that most horses in the Western world are trained on a different system and a different bit to the English ideas. They think our bits rather cruel. We think theirs wicked.

Actually there is a vital difference in practice. The American or Mexican bit is a severe, long-levered affair with a very high port giving vigorous direct control on the roof of the horse’s mouth. If it were used like an English curb or snaffle it would be abominably cruel, but it is not. Steering guidance is by neck rein,
a touch of the rein to the side of the neck, not by a pull on the side of the mouth. The aid of the body and leg twist is also used, but to a far lesser degree, because the stock saddle is a relatively inflexible affair and the rider’s legs are straight under him and not in close “knee contact” with the horse’s body. There is contact, but lesser direct leverage and a great deal more hard leather in the shape of the wing to the stirrup leather and the saddle housing and blanket to break the essential English “close to your horse” line of impulse transmission. America in its own saddle rides with a light hand. In an English saddle with no roll horn or high cantle and the stirrups forward many inches from the straight-legged vertical American saddle position, the experienced cow-hand is insecure and loses grip. Until he masters the new position he is inclined to hang on by the mouth very much like a bad English rider. What he says about “postage stamp saddles” is a quaint flow of “he-man” dialect.

An Englishman put in a Western saddle feels oddly insecure because of the difference in grip and poise. He will probably not hang on the bit, but he will, by reason of his training, use the native bit more severely than he imagines.

There are certain things to be learnt about changing a range pony over to English gear and the reverse. Years ago I used to race native ponies on the old Condesa track in Mexico City over a hurdle course. The problem of rebitting was solved by using a light snaffle far too wide for the horse’s mouth. It served as a reminder of the real bit, and in emergency exerted roof pressure if the nose band was carefully fitted.

Most of these ponies were stallions, and emergency control was essential, but they had all to be ridden with a far looser rein than is usual in England.
They took to the English saddle with its centre girth fairly well, but the English horse does not as a rule accept the two girths of a stock saddle without intimation that the rear one is a ticklish novelty. Apart from weight one cannot jump in a Western saddle because of the roping horn, which tends to hit you in the solar plexus. It can, however, be done by setting the stirrups eccentrically forward and short, and bracing hard against a recurved cantle.

I have never seen anything but the doctrine of the natural balanced seat and grip in buck-jumping, but I am always ready to see the "forward seat" demonstrated in a horned saddle. For myself, I should wear a six-inch-wide double leather "squaw belt" round my tummy before trying it.

The pitch of the roping horn tends to make one hold one's hands rather higher than is normal with the English seat and hand position. The height varies with the saddle you affect, and this is mainly determined by local fashion. You may have a short, flat pommel, a double fist broad, made of wood covered with raw hide, or you may have a thin narrow snake-headed steel pommel on top of swelling knee rolls. These were rather despised in my time, but they are of undoubted help on a bad pony and preferable to the old and approved device of tying your oil-skin slicker as a tight roll in front of the saddle-bow as a help to staying put.

Cow-hand punctiliousness with regard to matters of gear is at least as vigorous as British hunting-field orthodoxy. They have no equivalent for "It simply isn't done!" but they have the same splendid resentment of innovation. Rather, they had. Today I hear they are film debauched, and small holders in the hot alkali of Arizona ride about in the woolly chaparejos of the Montana
The Mexican vaquero, who is a very real and serious horse-master, has, however, not changed.

"But," says your Briton, "you couldn't hunt on one of these cow ponies." Well, as a matter of fact, you can. The word "pony" is misleading and covers any horse, and it is, I think, admitted that one can hunt on a polo pony. Actually we used to have a cross between a man hunt and a steeplechase over fences and down river-beds and arroyos, and you can hunt even a Mexican pony. They are, however, too small, but go north into colder country, and you find a capable North American cow pony which is practical. The cross with hunter stock is astonishingly useful, and we may yet see an evolution of the American horse which will impress us. But coming back at long last to the starting-point—hands, what a difficult subject!

I know eminent fifteen-stone nagsmen very tight-elbowed, exquisitely sensitive—splendid governesses for a good middle-class English spinster horse. Put them into the saddle on a Western pony—so far so good—let them gather up the reins and try the usual hand-to-mouth, and it is "wow-wow."

Put a good Western man into an English saddle and he feels all wrong, "like riding on a postage stamp backwards." He tries to control with light pressure and steer by neck rein, and again "wow-wow."

The horseman who holds the world's long-distance record for horse-mastership across the U.S.A. north to south with divagations is old Roger Pocock, now a member of the Brotherhood of the Charterhouse and retired from horsey cares. I once took part in an entertainment he promoted. This was the gathering of miscellaneous riders from the remoter and unfashionable ends of the earth and Empire, and a ride from the Savage Club into
Kent. It was a Pint-to-Pint (Kent holding many hostelries), but the education of Mr. Liveryman’s nags to the two-inch stock saddle had to be accomplished in the Old Kent Road, an asphalt place infested with trams. It was a stirring experience, but forty horses and forty men, no two having the same horse doctrine, survived the experience.

“It proves,” said Roger, “the marvellous horsemanship of the Empire.” “It proves,” said I, “the astonishing good manners of the British 'Oss.” We had everybody from Athabasca to Zanzibar to show us how it should be done. Every war from the Conquest to the Zulu rising was personally represented. All the degrees of longitude and all the parallels where alcohol is liquid were present. No men and no horses were hurt, and only the representative Briton was involuntarily dismounted by a two-decker tram—and his hands.

The truth is that a horse is amiably tolerant of almost any kind of seat, but unless he is English, with a tempered, experienced mouth and the wisdom born of pressure on the bars, hands are not wanted, and the merest ghost of an indication is all that is necessary to a decent beast.

As an American said on being shown an imported perfect snaffle, “A physical and moral support.” On the other hand, they can train their horses to endure our ways. I notice that they play polo in them rather nicely.

Now if our ponies had had the same early training—with the usual Western breaking and bitting—would they be a spot quicker in response? I do not know, but I have a very sincere conviction that the good Western horse or pony obeys its rider’s intimations rather more quickly than the equivalent standard of European horse.
The Facts about the Horse, says authority, very loud and very dogmatic, are laid down in Army Training. Bow, therefore, and put lip salve where it will do most good. Are not Weedon and Aldershot household words in the Empire?

Are not Weedon and Aldershot household words in the Empire?

The main trouble is that Army methods, excellent in their place, do not foster the strictest economy in the smaller private establishment. The modern soldier has, as a rule, a shorter period of service and softer surroundings than his vigorous predecessor. He may on occasion prove to be a good stable-man, but it is not wise to believe that Service experience necessarily means profound knowledge or inspires resourcefulness, and the ex-soldier is not always a good choice for those who cannot give personal supervision to the way the work is carried out. If, on the other hand, you get a really good one, he is excellent—once he has learnt civilian ways again.
A Point of View
A Point of View

PEOPLE enjoy hunting for wholly different reasons. There is, it is true, a fine old convention that a kill is the ultimate summit of bliss, but unless you have suffered recent outrage by "Bould Rennels," who has snaffled the fine old mallard off your pond or laid low those two matronly Barnvelders who produced the one tempting brown speckled breakfast egg, you may not feel particularly vindictive about the "varmint."

Personally I am rather slack about it. I like a really blazing good run with a kill, because it is a perfect piece of drama. It has the real kick in it because it sweeps on, checks, is unravelled, and at last carried on to its climax. It is in a sense like a first-class detective story with its full-blooded emotions, but it is real—the real excitement of the chase. On the other hand, my enjoyment is not seriously blighted if, as often happens in a woodland country, there is no kill. I have probably galloped as far, shared the generous optimism of the hounds, crossed my precarious and stimulating fences, negotiated my shameless gates, and got just as thoroughly excited. The fortuitous escape of the quarry leaves me fairly cold. I would rather he were killed, because it is good for the hounds and thoroughly popular with the agricultural community, who have no illusions about foxes. But I have little tolerance for the leaky sentimentality of the ginger-haired typist (who wears a trapped red fox stole), who says, "Aah don't understand haow peeple ken hent these pooer chrrechers! It sims to m'hai so cruell!" or, what is far worse, the nonsense of the nasty little theatrical half-men who discover a sex motive in "Cruel Field
Hard Up on Pegasus

Sports,” and attribute to the sportsman odd psychological aberrations. It is waste of time arguing with these people. Apply the text Solomon xii. 4 (reference unverified), “A dirty mind is a continual feast,” and leave it at that.

“It sime to m’hai so cruel!”

I think that a day’s hunting means totally different things to different people. One of your friends will be able to tell you who was “out.” He or she will know without a shadow of doubt nearly all the people present. Another will note every horse, and if you ask if so-and-so was there, will say, “Yes, rides a chestnut with two white socks.” Others will be wholly oblivious of either hounds or most people, and solely aware of their personal relations with their horse and meeting a few well-known friends or acquaintances of their immediate circle. There is even the actor-
milliner mind—appearance, clothes, the dressed part at the meet, being the only remaining memory. It is odd if you miss a day how difficult it is to get a real account of it until you meet the right person, who says, "Scent was not too good to begin with. He had the bitch pack and moved off to Denmark Wood. Old Carruthers took a nasty one trying to cut corners, but I hear he is all right and will be out again next week," and so on—the real eye-witness story by a real hunting man.

One can justify hunting on all sorts of grounds. It represents an annual expenditure in the countryside of about thirty-two million pounds (figures supplied to the M.F.H. Association by the Ministry of Agriculture), but the real question is—Does it need any justification at all? I do not think so. An attack on those opposed to it is, however, long overdue.

If one makes a searching examination of conscience concerning one's sin chart on a hunting day, it is almost certainly a negative return. There are perhaps a few slight lapses—envy of another's horse, a flash or two of malice about a fellow-creature or so personally distasteful to you, a little bad language, some possibly ill-founded suspicions of others' motives. After all, there is no reason why you should buy old Miss Buzzbee's iron-mouthed, evil-actioned cob just because her father's brother once carried a horn with the Wigan. (Besides, there was another brother. He gave up the Church and went to live in Capri.) But, on the whole, what a singularly arid environment for the onset of sinful temptation. It would, I think, be impossible for anyone but a superman to plot out a really well-considered bit of crime while hunting. He might do a bit of scheming while hacking back, but even then his horse would probably stumble.

The real villainy, I fear, must be limited to those who are driven
Hard Up on Pegasus

home in fur coats and expensive motor-cars, but actually they seem to be, in spite of their suspiciously rich circumstances, quite decent simple people, not really perhaps as predatory as some of us poorer folk.

If hounds are running, there is nothing else to think about: keeping up will occupy all your time. If they are drawing, there is the keenness of anticipation, the essential watchfulness and the speculation as to the probable line. If scent is poor, coverts a wilderness of woodland, and you keep contact by ear rather than by eye, you are still contented. It is not a feeling very susceptible to analysis, for it is at once too animal and too fine.

You are in more than physical contact with your horse, for in your mutual interest you and he share the knowledge and feel the excitement which you sense but cannot see. Your horse, quicker of hearing, probably knows more than you do, and is swifter to catch and interpret horn or the first note of a hound.

He is not, perhaps, so far as we know, responsive to the play of cloudscape or the colour and beauty of the movement of horses and men in the woodland. Light and shadow, the grouping of trees, the wet brown fields and bare hedgerows, the muddy lane ways poached with the hooves of cattle and horses, the complex sounds and sights and scents of the countryside—these you are enjoying, not with any sense of novelty, but suavely, just as one basks in the radiance of early summer sunshine, and one's body seems to soak it in. Yet you derive from it not only bodily well-being, but sheer relief from town-hatched worry and clear peace of mind.

It is, I am told, not intellectual, and I should be a brighter soul if I got a copy of Mr. Ditch's "Underwear" from Pimp's the publishers before it is banned by the libraries. Alas! Ditch bores
me stiff, and the terriers will roll on his work if I get it from the library. Yet it is recommended as the book of the month by the Cloaca Maxima Society.

Now the odd thing is that if you take an average sample of a score or so people out of any hunting-field, you will find that in that scoop of the net you have a very high proportion of people who have really done something: people who still matter to the world.

It would be a representative group of men of position and professional standing. There would be a fairly full group of administrators and men from the Services. There would be landed proprietors, possibly one or more professional men and some farmers,
and the record of useful achievement of the little group of hunting people judged on their individual records would wholly and completely outweigh anything you would catch in a dozen similar sweeps in a party of self-styled intelligentsia.

Now these steam-heated people who attack hunting are predominantly indoor folk. They are interested in the unreal world of transient novels rather than literature, and, poor creatures, many of them in the theatre. Anything more paltry than the present condition of the English theatre is difficult to imagine. Their reaction to the real world is hostile. They instinctively fear and dislike it. But it is a symptom of the oddities that they scratch and attempt to advertise their difference from their betters. Sport being the opposite of their own pleasures has attracted their hostility. An ill-behaved lap-dog can be more self-assertive than a kennel of sporting dogs, but there comes a time when one gets tired of the yap.

There has been too much yapping about sport by oddities and they have attracted some popular support among harmless but essentially empty-headed people. For a time it was an attitude which one regarded as a form of eccentricity. They were cranks. The situation has changed, for certain interests are now actively working the cranks in organised opposition to sport. It is a natural law that “action and reaction are equal and opposite.”

The oddities have now forced the rather easy-going majority of sportsmen into active opposition by a wholly gratuitous interference in matters which are not their concern. Malignant and ill-founded attacks have been exposed, but quite apart from attack and counter-attack in the Press, there is now a definite and perceptible stiffening of the social ranks, a tightening-up which definitely marks an unmistakable frontier. These oddities’ views
AN ILL-BEHAVED LAP-DOG CAN BE MORE SELF-ASSERTIVE THAN A KENNEL OF SPORTING DOGS
are hostile, their interference deliberate. Then, avoid their company and shun their organisations and their wares, and let it be thoroughly well recognised that they have presumed too far for further toleration.

The world, whether that of county, country town, or district, can get on without them. They are, to pillage the jargon of the psychologists, “ill-adjusted to their environment.”

Their view on Field Sports is deliberately anti-social and aimed at the destruction of tradition. It is an attitude which, if persisted in, must automatically invoke social reprisal, and the address of the British Field Sports Society is St. Stephen’s House, Westminster.
A Marriage has been Arranged . . .
A Marriage has been Arranged...

There are few more attractive affairs than trying to breed your own hunters. It seems a reasonable enterprise, and it might be cheaper than buying one. As a matter of fact, small-scale breeding is not really cheaper than skilful buying, but it has the benefit of an instalment system, as the outlay is over five years. You also get all the prolonged anxieties of motherhood, adolescence, education, and infantile ailments and calamities, but you get the delight of seeing the young things grow. Then, of course, there is just the chance of turning out something of super-excellence. In such a case you would, of course, have to sell it for much gold, and suffer permanent heartbreak and envy in consequence. It might have a distinguished career in the States, but it is a poor solace.

There is a small profitable return on the good horse, and an almost inevitable loss on the indifferent one which is on the light side, however blue its blood may be. They all cost the same to keep, and even charging their rations at production cost against the farm means an annual expense. By the time a young horse is fit to make its début it has cost the producer between seventy and ninety pounds. If he sells at a figure which shows him more than ten pounds a year profit he is fortunate.

The proposition is not an essentially paying one except under special conditions of natural grassland, but one can always make
believe that if it is not actually paying it is at least the cheapest way of getting something you cannot afford.

Temptation usually comes through the old mare. She is no chicken, and her poor old legs have needed pretty constant nursing. You know that she may do a few more seasons, but you also know that they will have to be lazy ones. You have, you reflect, always vaguely meant to breed from her. Well, perhaps a foal and a season’s rest would be the best solution. After all, why shouldn’t the old dear have a chance at maternity? The experts all deprecate old mares, but they are rabid geneticists rather than sentimental owners, and if you scratch around for information you find that old mares are, after all, not so bad. Naturally, they do not want to be incredibly old, and it is just as well that they should have had a foal some time in their chequered history. Anyway, you have a rather limited field of choice—brood mare, pensioner, or kennels—and the first is the happiest choice.

The choice of a suitable father is a profoundly interesting proceeding, and you get the Hunters’ Society book and burrow for information about the Premium Stallions in your area. You find that certain counties are admirably provided for, while others have one horse allotted to three counties, and it only travels at some remote and inaccessible place. This involves a difficult equation with time as an unknown factor, horse-boxes, and various considerations which considerably depreciate the value of the cheap service. On the other hand, you do get in the Premium Stallion a very carefully chosen type of horse. If you are an enthusiastic breeder you may have to send your mare to a particular county to secure the service of a chosen sire, but if you are not wildly interested and only require a good, sound, reliable
YOU HAVE RATHER A LIMITED FIELD OF CHOICE—BROOD MARE, PENSIONER, OR KENNELS
horse you will probably be more interested in what is locally obtainable.

You will be told that Tom Smith has a good horse, that Bill Jones has two—one good, one bad. Some will say one is bad, others will praise it and condemn the other. No horse suggested by anyone is one that somebody else "would not have at any price." All of them tend to transmit the worst of equine qualities, and you will learn that because Catsmeat's great-grandmother once went round a hurdle on the wrong side, all the Sausage stock are persistent refusers. In the same way Bakerloo's strain are all born with silver pipes in their throats because he was tubed when he was twelve.

It is perfectly awful to know as much as this about horses' grandparents, and the one consolation you have got is that you know nothing at all about the old mare's parents except that a dealer told you years ago that she was well bred by a man in the West Riding. You have always relied contentedly on this explanation, and found it a perfect answer to the curious. My own phrase is perhaps more in keeping with the times. If unable to think of a melodious name at the right moment I always say: "She's a self-made mare." This reply has daunted many of the horsiest people, for they do not care to admit that the expression is one outside their vocabulary. Actually I am quite accurate in describing her as by Parenthesis out of Hiatus, and people will look quite knowledgeable about this pedigree too.

Horse-breeding is a difficult topic, a delicate subject, and people who will deliciously dissect and get the fullest flavour from some mild village scandal or discuss dogs with embarrassing frankness are inclined to be a little more Victorian about horses.
There is, however, little which should shock a confirmed playgoer. It is, after all, the familiar motive.

In the end your mind is made up for you, because you learn from the local paper that Tritoma is to travel weekly between Gath Gilead and Beersheba. He is, to quote the announcement, "A most beautiful young horse, as pretty as any who ever looked through a bridle."

This statement also occurs on the horse's "card," but there the local printer has happily spelt it "bridal." Then there are anatomical details. He stands 16.2 hands high, has 8½ inches of bone, and has proved himself a father with all the abandon of an Old Testament patriarch. His racing glories (rather tenuous these) are duly stressed, but the ancestry and what they won in cash almost unsteadies the mind. The hero's sire won over fifty thousand pounds, his grandfather thirty thousand. Less is said about his mother's side, but it is flung in that her great-grandfather sired a Derby winner. In spite of all this, Tritoma will serve a limited number of mares at the registered fee of so many guineas, and half a guinea groom's fee. Heavens, if only those horse ancestors had invested their money safely and left it to their grand-foals, how comfortably off one of Tritoma's foals would be today!

Well, even if there is no equine law of property, here is very fine blood. You vaguely remember a picture of "Lanoline," the wealthy ancestress, a beautiful, snaky, slinky affair, being led in by a proud owner in a top-hat and a stupendous buttonhole for formal presentation to King Edward in a grey top-hat. Resolutely you commit yourself to an appointment with Tritoma, hoping that the majestic animal has not yet been booked for his limit. This seldom happens, for the limit is, as in poker, relatively flexible.
If you are more serious in your intentions and have several mares from which you can breed and land enough on which to run them, your prospects are better, for not every mare carries a foal successfully. In fact, the odds against successful service are about evens, and a year's anticipation over one ewe lamb is all too easily disappointed. For some wholly irrational reason it is customary to blame the stallion for inefficiency in these matters. He may be successful with other mares, but nevertheless this convincing biological evidence is ignored, and the good old feminist tradition of "blaming the man" is followed. Once you accept this traditional theorem, the business of selecting suitable husbands becomes even more complicated, as it is obviously wise to have a choice of several sires in the hopes that some are more potent than others. You become an equine matchmaker.

For your snaky three-quarter-bred mare you want a sire of bulk and bone; for the stockier but rather smaller hack your ambition is the exquisite refinements of the lighter thoroughbred type with possibly an Arab dash in it. As for pure Arab blood, unless you have lots of money and are prepared to wait several generations, it is best left severely alone. You might, it is true, get a polo pony, but you are more likely to get weeds which do not fetch the cost of their keep.

At the Hunters' Society Show you can see all the stallions competing for their Premiums and Super-Premiums, and there you can indulge your taste in the selection of meritorious points. You can reject heavy shoulders, lop ears, light bone, doubtful temper displayed in the ring, and any other exquisite refinements of hair-splitting opinion which occur to you. After all, having paid your subscription, you are there to criticise and to be disappointed in the available sires allotted to your district.
A stallion prepared for the ordeal of the ring is a really heartening horse to behold. He has the full masculine neck which in an age of geldings we so seldom see. Sculptors of the past displaying man on horse took with wisdom the stallions as their models, for there is a strength and beauty about the entire unspoilt horse which is different from that of even the most handsome gelding.

These Sultans live on the fat of the land and their bright coats are plump with the strength of good living, so that the roundness of their muscled limbs enhances the apparent shortness of their barrels. The tiered benches of the Agricultural Hall are full of ardent students of the equine form divine, and their interest in the competition for the War Office premiums is intense.

From the long parade the fortunate selected are led to the centre of the ring. There they are gazed at by eminent judges in bowler hats and stiff white collars, and the order in which they stand adjusted and readjusted till merit (in the opinion of the judges) meets its due reward. Young aspirants dethrone old champions. Sires of proven worth rise to the glory of Super-Premiums, and their fortunate owners are sure of a profitable season. There is a proud display of rosettes the size of pancakes, and even the rejected have a touch of colour in the shape of a gay headband.

You leave with a rather confused impression of infinite princely horses and a few scattered scribbles on your interleaved catalogue to the effect No. 53 was well shown—held professionally short, while 89 was recalcitrant but splendid; that you dislike No. 98 for small feet, and 72 for a coarse head. You will, however, have paid particular attention to those scheduled to your area, and will in all probability not find such a very great deal to choose
A Marriage has been Arranged...

between them. Anyway, there is plenty of time for reflection and the anodyne of forgetfulness between the Show in February and the merry month of May.

A wise provision of nature ordains that it is best for hunter foals to be born just about the time we begin to turn out horses into the pastures. The foal takes not the full year of that unwise rustic saw, "A mare and a hare go a year," but somewhere between twenty-five and fifteen days short of full year after the marriage. Too early a foal may be rather a nuisance in a year when grass is late, and there is a wet, cold and belated spring, and the last of April and the youth of May is just as early as you want them, particularly if the Icelanders are sending down one of their cold, draughty anticyclones.

You can either send your mare to stay with her prospective husband for a week or two, or he may be a peripatetic traveller who comes round your way once a week. Unlike human commercial travellers, few of these horses own a car, but all own a valet or groom who looks after their comfort and acts as master of ceremonies. These men have to walk with their owners, and it is a notoriously thirsty calling in hot weather.

The arrival of Tritoma and his man produces something of a subdued excitement in the stable yard. Your own people show rather greater enthusiasm about being helpful than is usual. The visiting stud groom has something of an air. You feel conscious that he is an entrepreneur as well as servant to a distinguished Houyhnhnm.

Somewhat deprecatingly you introduce the subject of the lady—"an old friend of the family," etc. He follows you to the paddock, where the old mare is looking her very worst. She has not yet got her new coat properly through, her old joints are
slightly creaky, and as she grins at you the revealing spring sunlight shows the old ivory of her scattered teeth. He is very diplomatic about it, "Nice-looking mare, sir; ought to show a very likely foal." He then entertains you with a recital of how his lovely horse has been hobnobbing with all the best mares of the rich and great of the surrounding countryside.

The little matter of the marriage settlement is discussed and your cheque made out. You then proceed to introduce the couple.

In old Spain before the days of the Republic the suitor used to play his guitar below a balcony. In horse circles the prelude to acquaintance is made by letting the pair talk to one another over a gate. This barrier is more than symbolic, for the lady may not be in a mood for dalliance and may rebuke too smart a remark by her young man by a rebuff from a pair of scandalised heels. If this is her mood, it will be necessary for her intended spouse to repeat his visits till he finds her in a less unyielding frame of mind.
A Marriage has been Arranged . . .  155

It is as well to bear in mind that courting couples do not like company. The presence of this singularly attractive suitor may become known to other horses. The gentlemen show a good deal of annoyance, but the ladies—well, you want to be careful that they do not jump their fences and come galloping to the enchantment of his husky, low-toned whinnies of romance.

Later in the year, when the old mare, plump with grass, rubs a confidential head against your shoulder, you may well ask her if she has, in the honeyed language of the speakies, "anything sweet to tell you."

But you will not know till a great deal later if what you thought she told you was the truth!
Scent Lies
Scent Lies

All the centuries of hunting, all the reams of paper written, have not yet brought us much nearer any explanation of the mystery of scent. It is, as a matter of fact, a far more mysterious subject than even the most confirmed head-shaker among hunting men imagines, for from a physiological point of view we know very little about the mechanism by which our nerves respond to even those strong odours perceptible to man.

As a matter of fact, we use our sense of smell far more than we realise, for what we usually call sense of taste is nearly all sense of smell. A person with a bad cold can taste that things are sour or sweet, salt or bitter, but cannot perceive any flavour in, or if blindfolded discriminate between, widely different dishes. In such circumstances we say that we cannot taste anything, but we really mean that we have temporarily lost our sense of smell.

The mechanism of the hound's sense of smell is in general like our own, but in place of having a small smell apparatus, it has a large one, and the connection with the brain is rather more direct.

The scent emitted by the fox is a definite substance which, like all other odorous substances, is soluble in water and in fat. It is, therefore, liable to pass out of the fox's body with perspiration or watery fluid, and equally likely to be present in the natural oil of the hair or any glands secreting fatty or waxy products. The pad scent is an oil much like that causing our own finger-prints when we go burgling.

A fox caught asleep may be chopped in cover, but it is generally agreed that a fox caught unawares throws relatively little
scent, while a fox properly found and forced into violent exercise emits a strong scent which gradually decreases as he tires. This is what we should expect. Initial alarm or anger provokes an emission of scent in a variety of beasts from fox to skunk, and even grass-snakes. It is probably due to a secretion from a ductless gland, just as in the case of the human animal alarm or anger stimulates the suprarenal gland and produces an immediate change in blood pressure.

The falling-off of scent as the fox tires may be due to several causes. There may be a reduced secretion by the body after a period of substantial effort. Fatigue may produce an accumulation of by-products in the blood, neutralising the scent substance, and fresh scent may temporarily cease to be manufactured, leaving the hounds temporarily dependent on, so to speak, the "debenture stock"—the trace of the scent dissolved in the fat glands and the oil of the hair.

The curious who wish to test the emission of scent under stress of alarm have only to rattle a stick in the entry of an earth tenanted by a dog fox. The human nose will be quite equal to the task of deciding that the inhabitant is a dog fox. On the other hand, a vixen when in whelp carries little scent, or a scent so modified that it induces wholly different reactions in the hound mind and is beyond the reach of most human noses.

It is interesting to follow with the eye of the mind what happens when Ranger drops his nose down to that heavenly perfume of fox. He sniffs vigorously. This sends a whirling column of air up the channels of his nose, and entangled or sprayed into this air stream are the molecules of scent substance. This we envision as a vapour. At the top of Ranger's nostrils is his smelling apparatus, which consists of a special patch of mucous membrane of
spindle-shaped cells out of which bristle a number of short rods of a fatty or waxy nature, the “olfactory hairs.” These project into the moisture which is present in the upper part of the nose and represent a palisade or network in which the scent particles are entangled.

Just what happens to a scent molecule when it comes in contact with these wax rods we do not know, but there is good ground for belief that it undergoes an immediate physical or chemical change and is annihilated. A confirmation of this is that scented air breathed up one nostril and then out again will be found to have lost its scent.

This may possibly explain why, when a line is foiled by a sheep-dog, it is so difficult to pick up again. It has been generally held that the smell of the dog obscures the line, but it may well be that he actually absorbs part of it. In the same way sheep, notoriously greasy creatures, might tend to absorb the faint “fat scent” of a tired fox. The contact of the scent molecule with the olfactory hair carries its message direct to the hound’s brain. We humans know how intimately the sense of smell is associated with memory and how keenly it may evoke appetite. The reaction of the trained foxhound to fox scent is probably largely an inherited characteristic. But what an appetite!

There is one other little point of some interest. The smelling mechanism is a darkish patch, for the cells are slightly pigmented. Now the human albino is usually unable to smell, and the perfume-blending artists of the perfumery industry are nearly always dark-haired, dark-eyed types. Pigment is apparently important as a factor in “nose.” To what extent this point works with hounds is not immediately obvious, but there is certainly a prejudice on the part of some judges against
light-coloured hounds, and certainly the majority of gun dogs are black.

If scent were a permanent quality, hunting days would be simplified, but the outstanding factor about scents is their evanescence. If scent is, as we imagine, a volatile emanation varying in concentration and liable not only to dispersion but absorption, we have very difficult factors to deal with. It may be affected by physical conditions such as the humidity of the air, differences between ground and air temperature, and factors affecting evaporation, or it can be absorbed by some substances and masked by others. Nothing adequately explains why it so seldom lasts for twenty minutes.

Newly-turned earth has a special smell of its own, the familiar scent of earth after rain. This is believed to be largely due to a minute soil fungus. Fresh earth is a powerful deodoriser (nothing is better for taking the "man-smell" off vermin traps), and the familiar "check on the plough" when the pack throw up their heads and are wholly at loss is probably due far more to adsorption of scent by mud on the pads than any change of temperature such as is suggested by the phrase "cold sticky plough lands," as distinct from warmer pastures. A definite change either physical or chemical must take place to account for the loss of scent. We can imagine our tenuous particle of scent vapour either as combining with some substance in the soil and changing into a different chemical body, or we can imagine it trapped in a lattice network of soil atoms and smothered in the gluey colloid of the clay.

Some of us have a gift which enables us to forecast with indifferent accuracy what kind of a scent the early part of the day will show. It is more of a "sense"—an intuitive response to con-
“THERE’S NEVER NO SCENT IN MOTTON WOOD”
ditions—than anything which can be related to any meteorological readings. Yet few have this gift developed to any real pitch of reliability—and it is not easy to tell on what they base their conclusion. The barometer is not a sound guide, despite the tradition that a rising glass is a favourable omen. Probably the most important meteorological factor is the relative humidity of the air and its temperature in relation to ground-surface temperature. If we have a day when the air is heavily laden with moisture, evaporation from the ground is reduced so long as there is little wind and little sun. A moist, dull day with little difference between air and surface temperature usually means a holding scent. If, on the other hand, the air is dry, there has been a frost overnight and there is sun, surface evaporation proceeds quickly as the frost is thawed, and scent is usually bad until the winter sun dips again. The air then chills, the moisture recondenses, and scent holds once more. This tendency to form dew means a good scent, but if the air is very still and the preliminary conditions are swathes of mist, we often get something which suggests a very wide weak distribution of scent possibly in vapour layers above rather than on the ground.

Snow stifles scent, but the moment thaw sets in scent is usually excellent. The explanation probably lies in the fact that the temporary blanket of snow conserves the earth heat which would otherwise be radiated into the air, and the thaw when it comes discloses a relatively warm earth surface which is a good “vapouriser” of scent. The atmosphere laden with moisture from the thawing snow does not take it up too readily, and scent lies “strongly.”

Less easy to explain are regional differences in scent. You will be told by old hands, “There’s never no scent in Motton Wood,”
and you will learn that experience justifies their generalisation. It may be the effect of a carpet of plants or bracken producing "smell fatigue" in the hounds and so weakening the response to fox. We know that when the nerves of the scent-discerning cells are fatigued by over-stimulation by one scent, they become quickly insensitive not only to that particular odour but to many

others. We may conclude that sometimes the smell of bracken or roots "masks" the fox scent not so much by overpowering it as by temporarily putting out of action the smell-receiving apparatus of half the pack. Whether it is best to leave them to puzzle out the line on their own in such circumstances, or whether it is preferable to lift them quickly before their noses are dulled, is a pleasant basis for argument.
Admittedly none of us really know anything about scent, but on the whole it is probably one of those problems which might gradually be forced to yield just a little more information if one studied it seriously. The scientific approach would require a travelling meteorological station wholly unsuitable to be carried on the saddle, and I for one am of too weak a flesh to consider stopping behind after a check to investigate the "why." On the other hand, some of these horse-box drivers or chauffeurs who follow the day might be instructed to take a few field observations.

We should eventually prepare a perfectly sound scientific theory of scent which would be rightly and properly rejected by all huntsmen and Masters of Foxhounds as a nasty chemical innovation. I entirely agree with them.
The Lovely Road
The Lovely Road

In the "good old days," according to legend, roads were non-slippery, comfortable to horses' feet, and entirely non-dangerous. Today we have these deadly bitumen and tarred surfaces spread over the old macadam. I believe it is illegal to use most of the convenient abbreviations or portmanteau words to describe these surfaces, as some set of commercial people will probably have registered the word as a trade name or a telegraphic address or stolen one's freedom of expression in some way or other. If you use a word carelessly, they come up, like a lot of Birmingham undertakers round the aftermath of a burial feast, and protest that horses cannot possibly slip on their particular brand of infamy.

This is, of course, rubbish. Horses slip with abominable ease on any of these surfaces once the stone top-dressing is worn smooth. On the other hand, we appear to have forgotten how the older surfaces were perilous from other reasons. Broken knees were a commonplace, and one was always hearing of the "fool of a groom" who had "let down" a horse on the macadam. If the owner did it himself it was sheer accident, but grooms were endowed with a particular quality of inborn, predetermined folly.

In those distant far-off days when hunting was explicitly better (if slower) than today, we were all brought up at particular pains to take our horses along the grass verges at the edge of the roads in order to save their feet. These verges were neatly cut with "grips" or ditches at intervals perversely calculated to interfere
rhythmically with any normal horse-pace. You could as a rule neither trot, jog, nor canter with comfort along these margins. They exist to a more limited extent today, but no horse in its senses ever naturally prefers the soft but uneven verge to the hard and convenient road. Take them on to the grass and either vigorously or subtly, according to their temperament, back they will come to the road in as quick time as they consider likely to escape the notice of the rider.

![Along the grass verges at the edge of the roads.](image)

We may consider that this is stupid of them, for manifestly the soft earth is better for their legs than the 'ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer on the 'ard 'igh road. But, on the other hand, do we walk on these verges ourselves or do we prefer the road? There is no question about it. Even a quarter of a mile of road edge over snips and heaps of scrapings is purely maddening, and we are back on the better surface in no time.
Then there is another phase we have forgotten. There was an intermediate period between stone and tar when the motor-car was making headway and the carriage horse losing ground. That was the era of dust—great sweeping, billowing clouds of dust. For a year or so house properties near roads declined rapidly in value. Motor goggles and veils were practical essentials rather than vagaries of fashion, and fine-weather motoring was, if anything, worse than driving through rain. The sweeping suction of the car raised the dust billows, but on a windy March day the horseman was also afflicted by this almost forgotten dust phenomenon.

Modern road surfaces have come to stay, but the curious thing is that the modern generation of horses seems to be almost as accustomed to motor roads as to motor-cars. On occasion they slip, and jumping off or on to such a road is pretty suicidal, yet modern horses are a great deal more sure-footed on smooth surfaces than their immediate predecessors were.

It is possibly a matter of use and rapid accommodation to surroundings, and we find a human parallel in the terrible fatigue that the country walk produces in the townsman and the equally objectionable, but less generally recognised, foot weariness produced by the hard, level pavements of town in a countryman able to walk untired all day in the country.

There are various patent pads and shoeing devices designed to reduce the dangers latent in the modern road. Some of them are effective, others wrong in practice as well as theory. All involve rather more expense, and many also mean more frequent visits to the farrier. Some work well in dry weather, but make things even more dangerous when it is wet. Others would be excellent for horses if they were always on the road, but are not too good for cross-country work over heavy ground.
In general, the best shoeing authorities condemn the use of any resilent material such as a leather or rubber sole or pad fixed between the shoe and the foot. The iron should fit direct to the hoof without any intervening material, and if rubber is used in the make-up of the appliance, it should be fixed in some way to the face of the shoe rather than sandwiched between shoe and hoof.

The device which is most free from objection is one which does not involve a special shoe, and does not interfere with ordinary shoeing. The type which consists of a flexible thin metal bridge carrying a rubber pad which is bridged across the heels of the shoe is undoubtedly the best. On the other hand, rubber is not much good on a wet smooth road. If cars skid in grease, and the human wearer of crepe rubber soles lacks plantigrade adhesion to the pavement, why should we think in other terms of the horse in similar conditions?

In dry weather it is excellent, and its resilience tends to lessen shock, but nothing has yet been devised which is free from all objections and compact of every adhesive virtue. Probably nothing but a full set of four poultice boots soled with Ferodo will ensure safety on some of our roads, and having got them on, a car would run into you, having misjudged your potential speed of manœuvre.

Besides, what, after all, does it matter? If you choose a relatively safe conveyance like a horse instead of taking the risk of driving or being driven in a car, your chances of serious accident are fairly low. You may implore your local authorities to exercise care in their selection of road dressing. This may or may not be effective. Though, thank goodness, we are not as other countries are—wholly and absolutely corrupt about our road contracts.
MY PERSONAL FORMULA IS TO KEEP MY HANDS DOWN AND INDULGE IN SILENT PRAYER
The Lovely Road

But do what you like, exercise every precaution, and the more certain it is that malignant Fate will inspire your horse with untoward gaiety on a frosty morning. Meeting the quite familiar baker's van, he will behave like a performing seal on roller skates, and nothing but your skill and blind luck can stave off calamity. The boy in the van, rapt with admiration at your elegant poise, and artistically aware of the dilated crimson nostril and flashing eye of your gay steed, may perhaps come out of his swoon in time to switch off his engine. It is improbable.

What can one recommend for these perils? Well, you can fit pads or carry a mascot, but my personal formula is to keep my hands down and indulge in silent prayer.
Frost and Other Curses
DELIGHTFUL as the English winter is to hunting people, it suffers from occasional spells of frost. According to a hunting man who had in his unregenerate youth studied theology, Hell is one long frost. The idea is rather contrary to accepted ideas about that country, but it may be so. Dante noted, if I remember rightly, a refrigerator compartment for some special offenders. Luckily frost is not often severe and seldom lasting. Mostly it is an affair of a day, or it may simply mean ringing up kennels to hear if the meet has been put off till an hour later; but sometimes we get a bad spell.

Nothing is more disheartening than a bright and bitter cold dawn with the arrow of the stable weather-vane pitching east and north. The very green of the paddocks seems burnt and laid by the grip of the cold, and the hardness of the frozen drive spells grim reality. There is no comfort to be got out of the barograph. The ink line is dead level about the thirties, and you know, without the help of wireless, that this is another curse from Russia.

The main problem is exercise. If matters are not too bad the sun may thaw a grass field enough for the minimum. The roads are suicidal, and you know that if it lasts you will have to lay out that untidy nuisance, a straw exercising ring—and with litter at eighteenpence a truss!

Mentally one registers a decision to defer this if possible, and it is possible to scratch along for a time by using a few mashes and some salts as a substitute for part, at least, of regular exer-
cise. If you keep your horses in on full feed, it is productive of that undesirable festival feeling which is so often noticeable at the first meet after a spell of frost. There is more kicking, squealing, and prancing than is pleasant or desirable.

A long spring frost spell is a very material source of loss not only to the hunting man but to the livery-stable keeper and the horse industry in general. The farmer loses his grass growth just when he can least afford it, and if the spell is really severe he may lose winter corn and oats as well. Even in a normal spring the end of February and the beginning of March is a hard time for stock in most parts of England, and horses wintered out anywhere except in the mildest parts of the south-west need hay keep as well as grass.
Youngsters need corn as well, not only for two years, but through the later winters too. Hard weather means hard times, and its effect is lasting, for it sets back the grass so that the spring growth is belated. If, as so often happens, an enduring hard spell is followed by a protracted series of hard night frosts, the pastures are so affected that it is almost May before there is enough keep in the paddock for the proverbially hungry hunter.

Rough ponies, on the other hand, seem to thrive under almost any conditions, yet even they will “go back” in the lean time. A good hay ration is not a great expense, and ponies are less critical of quality than real horses. Sometimes one is faced by early Easter holidays, and the problem of conditioning for children’s use. The objection to corn is that it involves exercise in order to keep down too much enthusiasm. Ponies in regular work should have corn, but the casual pony whose time is mostly spent on grass and the dole is rather a problem. It should, one feels, have more food. A solution I find satisfactory and inexpensive is a sparse ration of cattle cake with hay. Good linseed cake is on the whole best, but Thorley’s is very appetising and popular. Cake, in the same way, is useful with youngsters during the hard time while grass is scarce, and it has the virtue that it can be fed on pasture without waste.

If cold has its serious problems for the horse-owner, heat is, on occasion, almost as trying. Blessed is he who has water available in all his pastures, and is not afraid of the longest drought. A spring or a good pond is always preferable to the best of tubs and saves infinite labour in keeping it filled.

Water supply one can cope with somehow, but flies represent a problem which is wholly insoluble. The infinite variety of the
abominations may interest entomologists, but what a curse they are to horses! The commonest pest is the gadfly. This insect does not, like the mosquito larva, live in water, but is usually bred under semi-aquatic conditions. The adult fly dips down to the surface of water to drink, and the treatment of ponds with a layer of paraffin oil early in the season helps to keep down the numbers of the pest. The ordinary blood-sucking stable-fly is a manure breeder, and
can, to some extent, be abated by such luxuries as fly-proof manure bins and other ideal and expensive devices. Special cleanliness in the stable and good clean concrete floors are at least practical measures within anybody's compass. This fly is usually the one responsible for dangerous bites on humans, and if a stable seems to be infested, a raid with a squirt of Flit or some fly-killer spray is worth while in the general interest of all.

Then we have the bot-flies. These lay eggs on horses from which hatch larvae which burrow into the flesh and finally mature as maggots in the inside. There are several kinds of bot-fly, and their presence is often the unsuspected cause of not doing well. Balls do not shift them, but where they are suspected carbon disulphide capsules administered by a vet. may clear things up.

The warble is a greater nuisance than the bot, for the maggot burrows up in the winter and makes a swelling on the back, eventually making a small hole through which it breathes. It must not be broken or cut in the swelling, but extracted whole by opening and deft squeezing. Cattle are now treated with a deterrent mixture of derris-root powder as a preventive, and if everyone took measures against the warble the beast could be exterminated in a few years. Luckily the flies prefer cattle to horses, but warble is still one of the things which "may happen" to horses out at grass and only makes its appearance months later.

If this closed the list of parasites one could be fairly content, but unfortunately horses are just as likely to have worms as dogs. These worms may come through fly-bites in some instances, and from eating soiled bedding or grass in others. Not all of the worms are visible to the naked eye, but loss of condition or a poor coat, and above all irritability, are very clear indications. It is, I think, a wise thing to give a course of worm powders, followed
by a purge as part of the preliminary conditioning as soon as a horse comes up from grass. Most horses have a small fixed worm population and do not appear to worry about it much, but there is no doubt that they are better without them.

The liming of pasture-land is good for the sake of the pasture, and, above all, it also kills off many of the sources of infection. Old pastures which have been heavily grazed are often heavily infected, and paddocks are often as bad. So far as young stock is concerned, a regular attack on the worm situation is absolutely essential, for few factors are more likely to check growth and development. It is, however, not easy to treat horses when they are out at grass, but it is worth the bother and trouble if there is any reason to suspect heavy infection.

The problems of weather do not cease with plain summer or winter conditions, for we have other delights such as "mud fever" or occasionally "grease" from certain varieties of heavy clay. The cause is obscure, but if you are anything of a gardener you will know how some clay tends, like cement, to roughen and crack the hands—a sort of "chapping." This lets in the microbes responsible for the trouble when the alkaline clay takes the natural protecting oil out of the skin. A careful sponge down with vinegar and water, careful drying, then a gentle massage with neat's-foot oil will probably act as a preventive. Some advocate a heavy dressing of adhesive ointment before a horse goes out. "Grease" is, curiously enough, the horse ailment that has had most influence on the world. Dr. Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, held that "grease" was communicable to cows as cowpox and cowpox identical with smallpox. Today we associate vaccination with the cow, but in strict accuracy it should be remembered that it was a horse which first suggested it.
Potted History
HOUNDS and horses are Nature’s best inventions. If doubt arises concerning this axiom, consider any type-specimens of self-made men.

The true foxhound was held a generation or so ago to have come direct as a gift from Heaven. Providence, usually inscrutably stupid, but in this case almost humanly intelligent, had favoured a few well-selected dukes and peers with stallion hounds of incredible virtues. The simple faith of our ancestors has not been shaken by the prying of hound historians and geneticists. That was precisely what occurred. But it must be admitted that Heaven imposed the new blood on a well-established pre-existent strain and chose relatively wealthy mortal trustees for the gift.

Hunting was always a dominant preoccupation of the ancient Britons, and though history is silent on the point, it is quite possible that Queen Boadicea’s spirited wiping out of the Romans was due to their ill-advised interference with hunting customs. Our best authorities on Roman Britain have never discovered the reason for the rising, but out of the fragments of gossip that have survived, there is certainly a legend that Queen Boadicea, addressing her tribes, produced the body of a hare. Authorities have accepted the view that she was using the hare as a way of telling the probable chances of success. The Romans having an odd belief in auspices drawn from the appearance of the insides of sacrificial animals, it seems just as likely that it was a popular exhibit of the cause of the trouble, and that the fuss was about interference with hunting, the imposition of chariot speed-limits on the new Roman
roads, and the conscription of horses for campaigns in the Empire. Or perhaps we had hunted the fallow-deer the Romans had imported and got into trouble that way.

No one knows quite what the ancient British horse was like, but the Romans agreed that they were quite good, and they knew a bit about horses in their time. Our hounds they frankly admitted

Consider any type-specimens.

to be far better than any others, and the "fancy" started an immediate export of them to Rome. The early stages of hunting in Britain must have been very much like hunting is still in certain parts of the world. Horses of sorts were used, but more as conveyances and in order to assert social superiority than for any quality of speed. The native Briton could probably run very nearly as fast as a native horse could gallop, and could finish the day in better condition.
A day with the Cassivelauni Hunt must have been a sketchy affair, even if a very jolly one. Meet at dawn with half the tribe out. Men in blue (a serviceable woad tattooing with the Hunt Horse, the same as we see on the early British coins as a decorative factor), lots of chariots, women in the latest furs. The horses rough and the size of large ponies; harness limited to bridle, with possibly a little bone- or bead-work decoration. Hounds a rough, coarse-haired, unmatched lot, probably light in colour. Bronze boar-spears twinkling like gold in the sun. Plenty of real horn hunting-horns and real horns of mild home-brewed beer as a substitute for the dram flask. The quarry deer, wild-boar, roe, wolf, hare—anything. The country woodland, the noise prodigious, and the circuit covered not such a run as would oblige a whip-off because of straying into a hostile hunt's territory, with a free-for-all tribal fight to top up with.

The arrival of the Normans, again, gave an impetus to hunting. William, a man of keen perception, saw at once the possibilities of the country. To a modern mind some of his actions may appear a trifle arbitrary, but it was a tough time. The Norman chase was probably not quicker than, if as quick as, its predecessors. The Norman horses were bigger than the native stock, but, judging by the type today, not really beyond medium vanner in pace.

It seems fairly clear that for some centuries after this all good horses were imported. The export of entires was prohibited, and in spite of the continual warfare, monarchs of England always found time to make and enforce laws for improving the size and type of the English horse. In this endeavour they were supported by the Church, whose vigorous prelates knew what it meant to be well mounted.
One would have thought that the Crusades would automatically have dated the introduction of Barb and Arab blood to Europe and Britain, but it seems doubtful.

In the first place, these wars were in the plate-armour period and your knight wanted a weight carrier—a sort of Suffolk Punch—and rather despised the agile coursers of the light-armed Saracens. Secondly, it was quite difficult enough to get to the Crusades—and, as everyone knows, stores taken to a theatre of war are seldom brought back. Our troops apparently souvenired a few carpets and odds and ends of Eastern luxury, and the world-trip broadened the minds of the survivors, but so far as we can make out, it did not improve the horses. Soldiers and dogs are inseparable, so probably a number of lurchery kinds of greyhounds (answering certainly to the name of Saladin) and some of the "white hounds of Barbary" were brought back. They and their masters could travel somehow, even if penniless, but it needed funds to get back with a horse. Returned Crusaders were seldom rich in temporal goods, even if their spiritual well-being in the next world was most fully guaranteed.

The Wars of the Roses cost us a good deal in horseflesh, and it took us time to recover. A century later, when the Armada threatened and Elizabeth Tudor raised troops, we were so short of horses that only 3,000 cavalry could be mustered, and the Lord-Lieutenants and Sheriffs, who had to see that feudal quotas were forthcoming, were sorely put to it to find the horses for the horsemen.

We had gradually grown up under Henry VIII. to larger horses, and no stallions less than fifteen hands were allowed loose on the commons, forests, moors, and chases, where they sired promiscuously. The woodland counties, or what were
“THE FRENCH KNIGHTS COULD NOT CONTEND AGAINST THE GREAT HORSES OF THE ENGLISH”
then woodland areas, were allowed stallions of fourteen hands, but there was a Michaelmas horse drive, when the agisters were supposed to put down all stone-horses of less than regulation size. In general, we imported specimen horses from Flanders for agriculture, and from Lombardy and Spain for military purposes. Oddly enough, the Flemish mares rather than the Spanish jades were our salvation in earlier times, and though the battles of Crécy and Poitiers are celebrated for the use of the new weapon, the quick-firing long-bow, Bonnechose also records of Poitiers: “The French knights could not contend against the great horses of the English and the arrows of their archers.”

It is rather interesting to speculate on why our limited number of great horses were so good. In the past, most of the talk about horses has come from the Shires, and very frankly a lot of it is expensive regional bunk. Quite a large proportion of England is not the elastic pastures of the Shires. It is good holding fetlock-deep clay. When we crossed Flanders and British stock we got a heavy-land horse. The Frogs—i.e., whatever particular set of French bandits we were fighting at the time of Crécy and Poitiers—came up on lighter stuff, much more dressy, faster, and expensive. They stuck in the clay—and, as anyone who attended the last war in that corner knows, they have a good clay in France. We walloped into them with horses bred to stand sticky ground, and though the horses of the French nobility were dreadfully upset about it, I don’t suppose ours thought it any worse than a day with the real deer-hunting packs in southeastern England, the ancestors of those of today.

That period wants rewriting from a practical point of view. In the first place, the archery was quick-firing more or less unaimed flights at battle-range. The bows were elm, not yew, and
Hard Up on Pegasus

it was speed of fire rather than accuracy which won. It always does. Then came the walloping charge of the clay horses. Once one of the other side was spilt, the archers and footmen got him immobilised by his armour, and as they knew perfectly well what would have happened if the other side had won, there was no ambiguity about it. Light swift horses were not wanted till firearms knocked out armour, and then, so far as we can judge, there was a pause, a sensible decline in the military value of horses which did not cease until a horse was invented which was quick enough to get up to pikemen, allow its cavalier to loose off a couple of petronels at point-blank range, and then get away again before the matchlockman could load and fire a second round. It was a time event.

All authorities are agreed that the improvement of the English horse in terms of delicacy of structure and speed dated from the introduction of Barb and Arabian blood. No one has ever explained why the Arabs and Moors, two of the laziest and least logical races on earth, ever raised fine horses. The answer is that if you shift a beast to a special environment and special feed, you modify it into a subspecies. The Arabs certainly practised breeding with some intelligence, but the dominant factor was probably sunlight as an influence on growth and sugar as a feed. For a short space in the year the subtropics are a grass country, but it is a short spell. After that there is corn of sorts, tibbin or chaff, and consumable fodder of various kinds, and, above all things, dates. Today Eastern horses are pretty poor stuff, and some people suggest they never were any better. I rather doubt this, for though there has been decay, there was a period when North African intelligence was higher and a florescence of architecture and intellectual attainment was reached. The latter
was probably a Greek aftermath, but even so there once was a higher cultural level, and there may have been better horses. The French Government studs in Algiers probably represent the best stock today.

The strain which probably affected England most was not the traditional Barb or Arab, but the interbred African-Spanish horse. The Peninsula had been for hundreds of years a mixing place between the Northern European horse, the Southern horse, and the Barb and Arab from Africa. By the time of the conquest of the Americas they had evolved a really fine horse, known as the Spanish horse. Centuries earlier Spanish horses were applauded by the Romans and classed as distinct from the Barb or Punic horse, but by Elizabeth’s time they had got down to the horse as we see it in one of the few good horse statues in the world, that of Charles I. in Trafalgar Square. It may look stocky to us today, but what a lovely animal it was in its time! It had greater endurance and higher speed than anything in Western Europe, and with horses of this sort America was won and populated with horses. If horses had not thriven in America, would it have been yet fully open to the Old World? I doubt it. Africa remained “ignota” because of her deserts and her tsetse fly. The Amazon and other horse-proof countries of America are still largely unknown, and when all is said and done, the horse was probably the greatest (and indubitably the cleanest) factor in the chain of events which led to the existing condition of civilisation in the New World.

Hunting proceeded happily as a kind of slow-motion film in spite of English history. Historical decorators have been rather keen on hawking, but if you look at a tapestry you find that good old Sir Knight went out for whatever happened. He may have
started with his pet falcon hooded and jessed on his wrist, and
the castle falconer-sergeant with a hoop of birds in the rear, but
the dogs came too. Rambler, that loose bitch Eglovaine, Stre­
phon, Phyllis, and Magog the big mastie, all looked at Sir Knight,
waited tails, and said with expressive eyes: “Horse walk,
Master? Can’t leave us.”

Sir Knight, wholly bored with a lot of hungry friars on the
one hand and a lot of Bolshie sectaries on the other, probably
concluded that if one-tenth of the humans were anywhere as
nice as dogs, earth would be a pleasanter place—and took them.
The chase was a slow affair. Scent might be bad. The pet falcon
might refuse to come to the lure. The mixed hounds would
start a buck and lose it, and the kill was usually with a cross­
bow—but it was hunting.

The hound of the Civil War time was the ancestor of our
foxhound, but he was a slower and probably heavier animal,
and for the most part lighter in colour. We have no really good
evidence of what they were like, for the few hounds shown in con­
temporary art are, as a rule, wholly conventionalised or so badly
drawn as to be valueless as material for study. The Jacobean
hound was entered to hare and deer, yet the fox was also hunted,
though still vermin and not a beast of chase. The hound had
the long drop-ear, the lovely musical note, and it had, above all,
“nose”; but it is probable that its legs were more Jacobean
than we should now consider fashionable—and as for colour!

The rather slow hounds suited the equally slow horses, and
hunting was leisurely and carried out in a relatively small area.
Early rising was the rule. No eleven o’clock meets for our
ancestors, but dawn and the slow puzzling out of scent, the drag
of a homing fox.
No one knows who invented foxhunting. It is a great pity, for if anyone deserves a statue (or at least an equestrian bust by Mr. Hardiman) it is the Unknown Benefactor. It probably came about fairly naturally as an outcome of post Civil War conditions. The deer, both wild and parked, nearly all disappeared during the troubles, for soldiers of both sides lived on the country, and, anyway, the Nonconformist has little conscience about sport. We find the nobles of the Restoration importing deer and even game-birds to replenish their ravaged preserves. But the wild deer had gone except in the forests. They still endured on Exmoor and in the New Forest, and probably the Forest of Wyre, and the little roedeer still hung on in the deep woodlands. The squires now hunted hare rather than deer, and they continued to hunt hare right down to the close of the eighteenth century.

A few packs were entered to fox fairly early, but prior to 1750 it is doubtful if either hounds or horses had as a whole the necessary speed to induce the average country sportsman to take whole-heartedly to the newer, swifter sport. It was also an age of deliberate movement and relatively complicated costume.

We can, I think, fix an approximate period for a general sporting renaissance in England round about 1760. Before this we find little trace of really organised sport as a social activity as distinct from the individual private hunt. To some extent this can be understood, for politics had not been too steady and the Jacobite influence was strongly held by the country squires. News—and views—were largely distributed by word of mouth, and a meet for hunting at which any great gathering of gentry was present would probably have caused suspicion at Westminster.
Hard Up on Pegasus

We have Somerville, a classic poet of the chase, writing in 1735, but it is not, perhaps, till country sport becomes very much more generally the mode that we reach the beginning of that development which reached its highest peak in the first half of the nineteenth century.

George Markland’s poem “Pteryplegia, or the Art of Shooting Flying,” had a predominant influence on developing shooting as a sport, but in the main we must attribute the general tendency toward field sport to a new generation, on the whole content with the House of Hanover, and probably profoundly bored with tales of their fathers’ politics, ’Fifteen and the ’Forty-Five.

By the time of the American War of Secession and the merging of the French Revolution into the Napoleonic era, agriculture was extremely prosperous, landowners correspondingly wealthy, and foxhunting becomes with the turn of the century an organised national institution as distinct from a rural amusement.

The sport of foxhunting may be taken to have been started by the “smart set” after the Restoration, for we have the Charlton as a centre of rank and fashion in West Sussex from about 1679, later becoming the Duke of Richmond and Gordon’s Goodwood in 1735, and lasting until 1813. Doubtless other seventeenth-century fashionable packs hunted fox, but few claims for regular foxhunting entry as distinct from mixed hare or fox can be advanced. Mr. Dixon gives Mr. Fownes in Dorsetshire as 1730, yet the Badminton, with perhaps the longest reliable records, only entered to fox in 1770; while many other packs only changed over in the nineties under the terrific impulse of sporting fashion initiated by the Prince Regent. Hanover completed what Stuart had begun, but your squire of less resource
of purse or less amenable country hunted his private or trencher-fed local pack in the traditional green coat until well into the eighteen-thirties.

The men of the early nineteenth century were very definitely a hard-riding lot, but it is doubtful if they were on the whole as hard-drinking as is commonly supposed. Undoubtedly a good many were, but the odd thing is that the cellar books of many old houses do not quite tally with tradition. They drank more than we ever could today, but not quite the oceans we credit them.

With the coming of the industrial age we get a new generation and the classic period of the literature of foxhunting. Beckford is obsolete by the time of Delmé Ratcliffe, Egerton Warburton shines in place of old Somerville, Whyte-Melville and Apperley pave the way for Surtees—and Surtees will be read when Dickens is as dead as Scott.
If we go back precisely one hundred years we should find probably little difference in speed between their best horses and our best horses. So far as race records are concerned, a century of breeding has not shown any increase of speed, but early records may have been less precisely timed. On the other hand, they did not then understand the conditioning of hunters well, and so far as the rank and file of a small country hunt was concerned, the horses were not clipped. This probably accounts for the relative frequency with which horses were killed by over-exertion in the field. Hounds are believed to have been in general still heavier and slower than the modern type, but there is little to suggest that individual hounds of the past were not as swift as those of today. Selection has accustomed us to a far higher average performance by the pack. A very old, experienced and critical sportsman gave me his opinion that the modern hound was speedier and so better, but held that speed beyond a certain point was counterbalanced, not by a loss of "nose," but by a slower reasoning power which largely offset the advantage. The loss of music was, he held, of little real account in first-class open country, but a serious fault in country where cover was over thick. He held that for American and overseas packs a return to the Victorian type of hounds was the more effective and counselled selection from woodland country packs for the best all-purpose working strains.

Hounds, he held, had reached their fullest possible working development between 1870 and 1880, and all further progress had been in the direction of looks and standardisation of a perfect type rather than in any essential extension of quality.

On the other hand, there are equally sound critics who hold that no late nineteenth-century pack could hold a candle
to its modern successor, and that all breeding tends to produce a product meet for the needs of its own time and no other.

With successive periods the cost of maintaining hounds has become heavier; damage, wire, and poultry funds have come into being; but while first-class fashionable hunting demanding the very best of horses and equivalently heavy outlay in all directions has become prohibitively expensive, sound provincial hunting has not increased in the same ratio. Horses are high, but not immoderately high; labour is nearly double pre-war rates, but food is relatively low. Oats bear, as a rule, some correspondence to wheat prices, not perhaps an exact relationship, but a fairly intimate connection. Today we cannot get twenty-three shillings a quarter for English wheat. In 1802 it stood at one hundred and sixty-nine shillings—a war figure. All through the period 1825 to 1850 it averaged about fifty-five shillings, and keeps nearer to fifty than forty shillings until 1884. It then drops to a fairly consistent average of twenty-eight shillings up to 1907, increasing to thirty-three up to the war years.

For the full century from 1770 to 1870, the classical period of foxhunting, wheat was never lower than forty shillings a quarter; money was worth far more, and labour was vastly cheaper. This association between agricultural prosperity and sport is worth noticing.

A writer in 1840 gives the cost of oats as twenty-three shillings a quarter, hay at four pounds per ton, and cost of grass-keep as four shillings a week. Today prices are oats (delivered) twenty-four shillings a quarter, hay four pounds ten shillings, and summer grass-keep five shillings. If we take into consideration the cost of the labour, it is clear that the farmer is getting far less for his
horse-keep than he did nearly a century ago, and in 1840 wheat was sixty-six shillings a quarter!

Hunting folk may legitimately grumble at expense, but not at the expense of keep; and it is to be hoped that they will always buy direct from the farmer rather than from the forage merchant, whose source of supply may be foreign.

After all, you can hunt modestly even today for two or three seasons on half what it costs some poor devil to buy a new car in order to make his neighbours jealous. You can also comfort yourself with the thought that commodity prices are falling and everything is going to be cheaper except being governed.
Forgotten Horses
Forgotten Horses

ONE horse is better than no horse, but it is better to have two, four, six—or a dozen or so. With one horse, and that in not too good repair, hounds drawing away from home late in the day become an exasperation. I rechristened my horse Fortnum and Mason, riding by strict arrangement Fortnum in the morning, Mason in the afternoon, but Fortnum was always the better of the pair. He went galumphing to the meet, while Mason and I hacked back home sometimes in states of fatigue bordering on disillusionment. It was not invariable, though, for I have known Fortnum as contrary as a Monday morning barber, and Mason buoyant, resolute in endeavour, and irascible at leaving hounds. People will tell you horses have no imagination. Do not believe this. Once out of sight of hounds, out of sound of the horn, they will resolutely imagine to themselves brimming pails of gruel water, savoury bran-mashes with the chef's touch of gluey linseed, the mellow fragrance of oats and meadow hay, and they can imagine this fifteen miles away.

In days that give me a dryness of the throat to remember, England was a free country, and one could stop at an inn and get a pail of gruel for the horse and a big mug of ale or cider for oneself. I used also to buy very big arrowroot captain biscuits, the size of a saucer and half an inch thick, which I would share with my horse, who had, like myself, low tastes. Today it is useless asking a petrol station for these aids to travel, and the inns are closed till six.

I once suggested to a politician that if he seriously believed his
beastly party’s slogan that “minorities were always right,” the Acts affecting hours should be amended to allow horsemen refreshment. He replied that no Government could tolerate the thought of the congested traffic of our cities impeded by temporary cavalry. I suggested a limit to the country, and he vetoed it by pointing out that Surrey extended to the south side of Waterloo Bridge. Still, there are a few of us old veterans who remember pre-war England, and the ghosts of liberty wake at times as uneasy memories.

Do we remember our horses as well or better than we remember humans? I doubt it, yet some people have the faculty of remembering horses even more clearly than most of us remember humans. I met the other day a girl I had not seen for years. She is now within measurable distance of being an expectant grandmother, but she talked of days gone by and remembered for me a picture of a horse I once owned, which I must shamefully confess I had entirely forgotten. It took the return of a comparative stranger after many years to release those key cells of buried memory, but the spring once touched, the mind threw out odd disconnected pictures of the past. I saw once again the queer little stable where Robin lived, caught as it were the sharp acid of the vinegar boot polish affected by the crabbed old family groom, and sensed again the queer drying scent of pipe-clay brushed from leather. Robin turned round in his box to whinny to me, and I saw again a forgotten horse world: pink coats of curious straight cut, carriage horses, cockade coachmen in melton, phaetons and veils. Even the yard cat crossed the cobbles, and there was the leisurely autumn quiet of the air of a vanished world.

I felt shamefaced to have forgotten Robin, yet Pan knows what
IN DAYS THAT GIVE ME A DRYNESS OF THE THROAT TO REMEMBER
a medley of other horses I have forgotten too: nags good and bad, speaking odd languages and doing their job in odd parts of the world. Their names even elude one. They were all too often mere colour descriptions—"El Negro," "La Pinta," or even less specialised in Mograhbin to the horse "El Laoud"—yet nearly all of them had character, individuality of sorts. But I have honest doubt I can remember with precision any real detail about three-quarters of them. Some, of course, shine in
detail. It was La Palomita, an elderly Mexican lady, who stood rather over in front and climbed precipices like a cross between a goat and a leopard, who became suddenly bored with a week’s travel and without warning or cause other than justifiable fed-uppedness bit a steak out of a complaining pack-mule, woke me from the drowsy languors of a mountain trail, and provoked such calamity as took two days to mend. Unprovoked assaults like this dwell in memory, yet La Palomita, except for these odd temperamental flashes, was a mare of charming personality, courteous to the foreigner and tolerant of European ways. I have seldom had a mare who looked after me so well.

Then there was Juarez, not the reformer, but a wiry little stallion, great-maned and bold, good as those ponies go, a very fiery particle, but enduring and up to weight. His whole life was on the knife-edge of serious misbehaviour. He was seldom on four feet except when racing, and he jumped like a deer.

His mozo rode him round bare-backed, while another small boy carried the “silla Inglész.” The mozo could stick to hair like a monkey, but on pigskin he was volatile. He was then saddled for me, and my superior weight alone kept me (and that not always) in the appointed place. He was beautiful to look upon, a joy to ride in contest, and a curse to hack. He was bought from me by a man of wealth who aspired to possess him, but he was never ridden again after the first morning. The mozo in disconsolate grief supercharged him with corn—my corn. On the whole I did well on Juarez. I parted from him with secret relief—and have never ceased to regret him. There is something about the arched swollen crest of a stallion that is sheer horse. Juarez might have stepped out of a classical frieze.

Another horse I remember—Hassan, a Barb. It was in the
unsteady times of the fall of the Sultan Abdul Aziz, and the rise of Sultan Mulai Hafid. I was on his side, and on his arrival at Fez he gave me, among other lavish gifts, several horses, but—such is the subtlety of African Courts—none were in good repair. Hassan I bought in a weekly market a day’s ride away from Fez, for the very good reason that no one in his senses would risk bringing a good horse near the throne of power.

He was a likely-looking pony for the country, but blemished with a herring-bone-pattern firing for a curbed hock. Yet he seemed sound enough. The owner was a small-part sheik with Berber blood in him. Dress him differently and you would barely tell him from a mountainy man of Kerry. Negotiations were lengthy, including a display of the animal’s paces. Full gallop to full stop, disregard of the discharge of firearms and black powder with a cloud of smoke.

"As nice a little 'oss as ever looked through a bridle," said the sheik in dumb show. "Ee b—dy good 'orse," said the official interpreter, piously engaged in a wrangle for a rather higher percentage of the purchase-money.

Now Moorish reins are banded strips of crimson leather, the trappings you see in the Bayeux tapestry. The saddle is a queer padded erection with a spoon-shaped cantle and the shortest scuttle stirrups on earth. Below it are rugs and blankets folded to a problematical fit and Heaven knows what sores and galls. The bit is a work of savage ironmongery, but it is in effect simply a very severe high-ported bit working on the roof of the mouth rather than the bars of the jaws. Oddly enough, it is easier to educate a Barb to one of our bits than horses whose mouths have been spoilt by equally heavy pressure in the wrong place. Despite their barbaric bits they understand neck flexions, as our
post-graduate nagsman terms it, and come well to a curb. You will not get an effective snaffle mouth, as the horse does not quite get your meaning through a snaffle in the same way. A neck-rein-broken horse needs a mild curb to get the same signals.

Hassan stripped well for a Moorish horse. There was a slight swayed back, but, believe me or not, a saddle-backed horse is one of the most comfortable rides in the world, and there is no

nominal malformation which so abates price without in any way affecting strength or endurance. If you have to ride long daily distances, I commend the saddle-back.

There followed a close hour and a half of traditional horse-coping—vendor behaving according to classic lines in his language, lean brown supporters in coarse wool haiks gathering to support him. Languid disinterest on my part; emotional high-

Cheered by a crowd... I mounted.
pitched expostulation on the side of the interpreter. The Moor is fanatical, mainly about money, but otherwise he is a very decent sportsman. Still, there is a ritual about these things. It would not be decent to buy a horse casually because your Arabic was bad. The seller's feelings have to be considered.

We put my saddle on Hassan, folding blankets like a horse-wrangler fits a forty-pound stock saddle to a weedy cayuse. Mr. Owen or Mr. Souter might have disapproved, but it makes a tolerable fit, and no English saddle distributes its weight over big surfaces like a stock saddle or an Eastern one. Cheered by a crowd who devoutly hoped the Christian would break his neck, I mounted. Hassan behaved a great deal better than most Christians or followers of the Prophet—in fact, he had no sectarian bias; and I paid out eight pounds' worth of depreciated Hassani silver, and the horse was mine.

The Arab's farewell to his steed consisted in biting every coin in that half-bushel of bad silver. Having found relatively few bad ones, he importunately demanded a luck-penny. Then quite suddenly he felt the material side of the deal was over. He ran to my stirrup, and in spite of the difference of languages, managed to make clear his meaning. "A good horse, Nizrani; I bred him. Too good a horse for any damned Nizrani."

"You catchum horse because you Inglis. You Frances or Spagnol no catchum horse," said the interpreter. He was confirmed by a plump, well-washed Hadj, who had been a pious spectator of the deal. He quoted voluble texts and seemed wholly favourable.

"He say," said the interpreter, "you b'long Inglis." He waved a dingy finger round his sparse-bearded face. "You meat, you red, you like Consool Abristo. Frances he white-face;
no good." Now Bristowe was in the Diplomatic or the Consular, and had ridden with the Tangier Tent Club in earlier days. I was accepted as a decent sort of infidel with horsey proclivities simply because another Englishman had by his example earned us a national reputation.

There is not too much of the spirit of chivalry left in these days, but I always understood with the Moors how Saladin would knock off the battle and send genuine help if Richard was sick. They are very fine sportsmen, and if they have no words in their language to express our Western European ethic, at least they live up to it a jolly sight better than we do. I always found them the most sporting crowd in the world, and in spite of intense fanaticism, villages would turn out for a general hunt of everything from hyena to boar, and you could always depend on the sportsmen of the company to tell the unco guid to shut up about religion and not interfere with sport when a stranger came in from another country.

That's the curse of it with horses. Their lives are longer than a dog's, yet, as someone said, "If my dog lived till fifty—what should I do then?" Perhaps it is as well that we are forgetful, that time sponges the slate clean of memory. But sometimes, if you are one of those weak-minded people whose animals become individuals, a stray chord wakes memory and you wonder more than a little unhappily how Fates outside your control treated them. One hopes wistfully for the best; one knows how circumstance made any other issue hopeless, but there is always a sigh in my mind when something reminds me of my lovely forgotten horses.